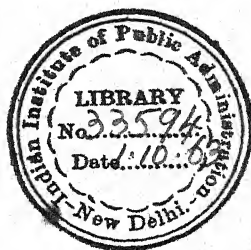


# FATEFUL YEAR

( Being the speeches and writings during the year of  
Presidentship of Congress )

By

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## REPLY TO A MUSLIM FRIEND'S CRITICISM

(Press Statement dated 14th October, 1946)

In connection with the ensuing Presidential election, a Muslim friend has sent to Gandhiji some passages from my writings that appear to him, and to a certain section of the Muslims, to be anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim. Gandhiji has handed over these cuttings to me and asked me to answer the charge publicly. These cuttings are from my two books, *The Gandhian Way* and *The Latest Fad*. In both these books I have discussed Gandhiji's philosophy of life, individual and social. My argument is: "Gandhiji has elaborated no philosophical system.... Yet all his socio-political plans and activities are organically correlated and integrated. They are based upon certain fundamental principles and a unity runs through them all. They can neither be cut off from these basic principles nor from each other."

The basic principles of Gandhiji's philosophy are stated by me thus: "For Gandhiji the individual has a divine origin. He has also a divine destiny. His aim, therefore, must be spiritual and not material...."

"The individual must work out his perfection in a spiritual society. Such a society must be based on principles that would lead the individual on to his divine destiny. Briefly stated, these principles are those of Love, Non-violence, Truth and Justice. A social order based upon these excludes all exploitation, economic, social and political....."

"What Gandhiji contemplates is a casteless and classless society....."

"If the nation is therefore to be saved, it cannot be done merely by the transference of political power, however important that may be, but by some revaluation of life's values. Such a transformation would be

spiritual and idealistic. Such was the French Revolution and is the present Bolshevik Revolution, in contrast to the successful movements of liberation from foreign yoke in many modern countries. In the case of the former not only politics but the entire life of the group is affected and transformed and a new epoch begins."

These ideas of mine about Gandhiji's principles and philosophy were criticised in 1939-40 in the Pirpur Report and the League Press. The Pirpur Report said: "Acharya Kripalani in effect says that Mr. Gandhi is trying not so much for a political revolution in the country as for a spiritual revolution, that he seeks to change the values of life and usher in a new epoch in history. The object seems to be the conversion of all people to such ideas. Even the Muslims must accept his doctrine of Ahimsa which is against the accepted principles of Islam which permits violence and retaliation under certain circumstances." The comment in those days of the *Star of India* upon what was written in the Pirpur Report was: "For a Muslim to accept, or in order that the Muslims may accept this doctrine of loin-cloth or his other ideas, he must change his religion."

These criticisms of my ideas about Gandhiji's philosophy given in the Pirpur Report and the *Star of India* and several other Urdu League papers were answered by me in an article which had wide publicity in the Indian Press, written in January 1940. I cannot do better than to reproduce what I wrote then. I said: "Evidently, my critics have confused the word 'spiritual' with 'religion'. They think that spiritual values are the values of a particular religion. They have failed to see that the French Revolution, which was in the interest of the goddess of reason and free thought, and the Bolshevik Revolution whose ideology is frankly materialistic have been classed by me among spiritual revolutions, because they try to effect changes through ideas and ideologies which are not material things but belong to the realm of the mind and the spirit. I have

contrasted such revolutions with the purely political movements of liberation, interested only in the change of the form of Government.

"After all the change of values that Gandhiji proposes, if his principles are accepted, are such as no religion has ever rejected. Gandhiji's cardinal principles are Truth, Justice, Universal Love and Brotherhood. I refuse to believe that Islam, like any other religion, does not stand for non-violence. There are enough martyrs of the faith who suffered and died, blessing their enemies. To suppose that such salt of Islam did not understand and appreciate Islamic values is to utter a blasphemy against those who proved their faith with their life's blood. Even if the orthodox interpretation of Islam be accepted, the use of violence is permitted only as a painful necessity."

I do not think that Gandhiji, by trying to change old ways and values, is the enemy of any particular religion. In fact he holds these values to be universal inasmuch as they are at the root of all great religions of the world. I, therefore, fail to see anything anti-Islamic in what I have written in my two books, and if there is, I share it with Gandhiji unless he repudiates my interpretation. Both the books were read by him and for each he wrote a brief foreword. I am content to allow the controversy to rest here.

## PRESIDENT-ELECT

*(Press Statement dated 18th October, 1946)*

The nation has done me great honour in electing me President for the next session of the Congress. I have received numerous messages of congratulation from friends. I, however, feel that the messages are today premature. They will be in place only when I relinquish the reins of office. If then I have done well I may deserve congratulations. What I need today are the blessings of elders and the good wishes of friends and colleagues.

I am not unconscious of my limitations. I know I have neither the brilliance nor the scholarship of my distinguished predecessors in office. I have been throughout my public life of over thirty years and more a soldier in the fight for freedom. The soldier's highest virtue is not his capacity to fight or kill but his ability, if need be, to die at his post. This, God helping, I shall not hesitate to do when occasion requires.

The task before me at this critical stage of our political history overwhelms me. Some friends have sincere doubts of my capacity to shoulder it—and well they might, for the task is heavy. They think that I am vehement in my language. It is not for me to deny this charge. I can only say that this vehemence is due more to the depth of my feelings than my temper. But however vehement my expression, it is always in the interest of ideas. I have never used it to attack individuals. However, I can assure friends that it shall always be my effort to curb even this vehemence of expression. This curb is necessary for the discharge of the duty to which Congressmen have called me.

Some friends have accused me of being anti-Islam. A few days back I answered this charge publicly. All I wish to say now is that I have never been consciously guilty of communal bias.

So far as the Hindu-Muslim differences go, I feel that the economic and political interests of the masses are identical. What injures the Muslim masses is bound to harm the Hindu masses too. The majority community, however, must yield to the minority, whether Muslim or other, in everything except what injures the vital interests of the country. To compromise on these would be a failure of duty and would ultimately benefit neither the country nor the minority concerned.

My first task, I conceive then, is to exert my utmost in the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity so that the inhumanities and barbarities that recently disfigured and disgraced Calcutta and still do East Bengal become things of the past. I hold the essence of all religions to be the moral law. Individuals may dispense with it and yet be physically alive. But groups, whose members live as neighbours intermixed, cannot even physically live if in their dealings with each other they disregard the restraints of the moral law. This is what is happening in Bengal. Terrible as the last famine was, I consider the nature of the communal trouble as more terrible inasmuch as it affects not only the bodies of men but their spirit. They live in perpetual fear which is the greatest enemy of man. Under its grip all moral restraints get loosened and man becomes a monster. Today it is Bengal, tomorrow the whole of India may be in the grip of this fear. Let, therefore, every Hindu and Muslim take thought and exert his utmost to bring about peace and harmony.

My second concern will be the purification and consolidation of our organisation. We have gained much through it. But we must be conscious of its growing defects. These cannot be removed merely by external and constitutional devices. They can only be removed by the cultivation of public virtues. We have not the police and the magistracy that keeps individuals' ambition for power and position under reasonable control. If we have to avoid the race for power and office we must put voluntary restraints

upon our public conduct. We must create healthy conventions. Our elections must be influenced by truth and non-violence. If there is competition, let it be in the realm of service, sacrifice and field work, and not in securing office and distributing patronage. Office and power are needed for effective work and service, but let these come as the ripe fruit of faithful, untiring and humble duty done. In all these directions Congressmen can always count upon my help and co-operation even as I must count upon the advice, help and co-operation of the elder politicians and leaders.

(Press Statement on Noakhali, Calcutta,  
dated 26th October 1946)

I have visited some of the affected areas in East Bengal and seen and spoken to the villagers and refugees in several camps. I have come to the following conclusions which I believe can be proved with appropriate local evidence before any impartial tribunal:—

(1) The attack on the Hindu population in the districts of Noakhali and Tippera was previously arranged and prepared for. It was deliberate. If not directly engineered by the Muslim League, it was the result of the League propaganda. I have no doubt that prominent local leaders had a large hand in it.

(2) The authorities had warnings about what was coming. The warnings were conveyed to them orally and in writing by prominent Hindus in the areas concerned.

(3) The Muslim officials connived at the preparation going on. A few encouraged. There was a general belief among the Mussalmans that the Government would take no action if anything was done against the Hindus.

(4) The *modus operandi* was for Muslims to collect in batches of hundreds and sometimes thousands and march to Hindu villages or Hindu houses in villages of mixed population. The crowds had their leaders and spokesmen. These demanded first subscriptions for the League and sometimes subscription for the Muslim victims of the Calcutta riot. These enforced subscriptions were heavy, sometimes amounting to Rs. 10,000 and more. Even after the subscriptions were realised, the Hindu population was not safe. The same or a successive crowd would appear on the scene later and begin looting Hindu houses. The looted houses in most cases were burnt. The loot was not confined



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merely to cash, ornaments and other valuables, but everything that could be of use for householders such as food-grains, utensils, clothes, were all looted. The looters also took away cattle with themselves. Sometimes before the houses were looted the inmates were asked to embrace Islam. However, even conversion did not give them immunity against loot and arson. The slogans raised by the attacking Muslim crowds were those of the League, such as "League Zindabad", "Pakistan Zindabad", "Larke Lenge Pakistan". The Hindu population was also told that the murder, loot and arson that went on was in revenge of the Muslim lives that were lost in Calcutta.

(5) All those who resisted were butchered, sometimes they were shot, for the rioters had a few shot guns with them. These guns belonged either to the Muslim zamindars or were stolen or snatched away from the Hindus. People were killed even where there was no resistance offered or expected. It was not possible for me to ascertain even approximately the figures of all those who were killed. In one area, viz., round about Dutta-para, detailed enquiries revealed that about 400 people were killed. The names of most of these were given to me. I have on record cases where 15 to 20 members of a family were brutally murdered. In some families all the male members were murdered.

(6) Even after looting, arson and murder, the Hindus in the locality were not safe unless they embraced Islam. The Hindu population, therefore, to save themselves, had to embrace Islam *en masse*. As a sign of their conversion they were supplied with white caps used by the Muslims in the locality. Often these caps were new and on it was stamped the map of Pakistan with the words "Pakistan Zindabad". The Hindu population was called to the Friday prayers and made to recite *Kalma* and perform *Namaj*. Women were also converted by their conch bangles being broken and their *Sindur* being removed. They were also, as a sign of conversion, asked to touch a cloth, which had been consecrated by a Pir! The women had also to recite the



Kalma. All the images of gods in Hindu houses were destroyed and all the Hindu temples in the affected areas looted and burnt.

(7) There have been cases of forcible marriages. It is impossible to ascertain at present the number of such marriages. One girl was rescued by the European District Magistrate of Noakhali on the 25th on a detailed report made to him by Sucheta Devi who had got facts from a woman.

(8) For obvious reasons it was not possible for me to ascertain cases of rape. But women complained to Sucheta Devi of having been roughly handled, their conch-shell bangles—symbols of their married life—broken, and their vermilion marks removed. At one place they complained that they were then thrown on the ground by the miscreants who removed their vermilion marks with their feet.

(9) The Hindus who live in the affected areas, whether converted or not, live in perpetual fear.

(10) Approaches to the affected villages are effectively guarded by League patrols. In some cases permits have been granted to the newly converted to leave a village and return. I have seen these permits.

(11) Those who happened to be outside the affected area at the time of the disturbances have not been able to go to their villages. They have, therefore, no knowledge of their relatives.

(12) Men, women and children from many families are missing. There are no means of tracing them. Village post offices are not functioning. People can neither receive nor transmit letters. They cannot get postcards or envelopes.

(13) Police did not function during the riots. They are doing merely patrol duty now. They say that they had and have, no orders to fire except in self-defence. The question of defending themselves never arose, as the rioters did not interfere with them.

(14) I can testify that arson went on up to the 20th. I saw houses burning in Chandpur and Noakhali areas on the 19th and 20th from the air. The areas I

visited had already been devastated and all that I could see was the helpless plight of the Hindu villagers, whether converted or not. Having lost their all they have neither shelter, nor clothes, nor food.

(15) There are yet many pockets of Hindu population guarded or surrounded by the Muslims. These people want police or military escort to take them to safe localities.

## EAST BENGAL TRAGEDY

*(Press Interview dated 29th October, 1946)*

Q. We would like to hear something about your experiences in East Bengal.

A. What I had to say about the East Bengal tragedy has already appeared in the Press. I made a long statement before a Press Conference at Calcutta on the 26th. The statement is of course not exhaustive. I have purposely withheld from the public certain very humiliating incidents which, in my opinion, would further embitter the feelings of the aggrieved community. I think it is wrong on the part of the Muslim League leaders to try to minimise the character of the tragedy. In my opinion it is disservice done to the Muslim community. It encourages it to think that violence will be connived at by the League leaders and that it will pay in the long run. To minimise evil beyond what is warranted by facts is in a way to condone it. The Government of Bengal too must not try to minimise the extent of damage done. If figures of murder, arson, loot, forcible conversions and marriages and kidnappings are exaggerated, it is the obvious duty of the Government to give the figures collected by them. Rumours and conjectures must be combated by facts.

The Government say that the loss of life is much less than has been mentioned in a section of the Press. The question is not how many innocent people were done to death. The more important question is why were they allowed to be killed? Why were not precautionary measures taken? The official world seems to think that loss of life is the greatest calamity that can befall a human being. But the greatest calamity for honourable people is to be obliged to forswear their faith at the point of the pistol. If all the people forci-

bly converted and all the women abducted and forcibly married had been done to death, in my opinion, that would have been a lesser tragedy than their yielding to force. I, therefore, consider the present terrible calamity in East Bengal as worse than the 1943 famine that took a toll of three million lives. Again it is said that outside goondas came and created all the trouble. As if the entry of outside goondas and their exit from a territory, which on the Bengal Government's own admission, is so difficult that after 15 days high officials have not been able to penetrate it, were more possible to outside anti-social elements. Were the resources at the disposal of the goondas greater than those of the Government? Outside goondas do not loot things of every-day use, such as clothes, foodstuffs, utensil, etc. They don't drive away cattle with themselves. Outside goondas are again not interested in forcible conversions and marriages. They don't take Pirs and Maulvis with themselves to perform conversion ceremonies! A few people from outside may have been responsible for organising the community. But the community must have had, and I have evidence to prove that they did have, local leaders. Also the community was made ready for this kind of uprising by the hymn of hate sung for so long by the League leaders and the violence preached by them. If a doctor is to administer the proper remedy he must diagnose the disease properly and truthfully.

Q. Have you seen Lt. General Bucher's statement? It seems to contradict you.

A. Before the General's statement appeared in the Press I had it from him the previous evening. He says, "The disorders were caused by hooligans whose action was pre-arranged, who worked with a sort of plan." Hooligans never belong to one community. In big cities like Calcutta and Bombay, whenever there is communal tension, both Hindu and Muslim hooligans take advantage of it. Here it seems the only hooligans in the area were Muslims. Then hooligans are rarely fanatical. They are cool, calculating, anti-social ele-

ments who are interested more in cash and jewellery than in forced conversions and marriages. It is also absurd to think that in the villages there are thousands of goondas, for it is admitted that they attacked villages in mobs of a few hundred if not a few thousands.

The Press report also says that Lt. General Bucher was "emphatic in maintaining that there was no general uprising on the part of Muslims." The only reason for holding this view that the General gave was that no incidents took place in the big towns! This single factor cannot alter the character of the uprising. I have no doubt that in the affected areas the rising was of the general Muslim population. That nothing was done in big towns is due to the fact that the uprising, as the General himself admits, was planned. The General does not perhaps know that in the big towns the difference of population between the Hindus and Muslims is negligible. Sometimes it is in favour of Hindus and sometimes of Muslims. The City Hindus are better organised and more resourceful. The leaders of the community had a plan and it was to avoid big towns. They had their recent experiences in Calcutta where they found that both sides could play the same game.

When it is said that there was a general uprising of the Muslim population it does not mean that every Muslim participated in it. It only means that the general mass participated, and I have no doubt they did so in the affected areas in spite of the fact that nothing happened in big towns. That there was very great tension in big towns and both sides were watching carefully each other's activities may not be denied by the General. Then mass conversions and forcible marriages are not possible without the active or at least the passive backing of the community. The active elements in the community in the affected areas participated in the uprising and they had the passive backing of the community, considerable number of individuals apart.

However, I could have understood the General's statement if it had been made after visiting the interior.

I know he had not penetrated the affected areas. He had been, so far as I know, outside Calcutta, only at Chandpur or, it may be, at Commilla. I know he had no reports from his officers as the first batch of soldiers that reached anywhere near the affected area was by the 25th noon at Duttapura in Noakhali which place I had visited the previous day. The Press Conference was called by the General on the 26th at Calcutta. I am sure, communication between him and his men was not possible in one day. I feel that when the General goes into the interior and sees things for himself he will change his opinion.

## LET FACTS SPEAK

*(Press Statement dated 1st November, 1946)*

My attention has been drawn to the resolution of the Bengal Muslim League as published in the *Dawn* of today, criticising my statements on East Bengal. The resolution says that my statements in regard to East Bengal disturbances are 'not only unfortunate but most irresponsible for his (my) great position as the President of the Congress.' I fully realise the great responsibility of my present position. Were it not for that I might not have rushed to East Bengal and remained there at a time when a momentous session of the Working Committee was taking place in Delhi, over which I was expected to preside. I have made my statements with a full consciousness of my responsibility. In my first statement at a Press Conference in Calcutta, on the afternoon of the 26th, I said that having studied the situation in the interior, I had come to certain "conclusions which I believe can be proved with appropriate local evidence before any impartial tribunal, provided the people giving evidence are assured of security against molestation." Let an impartial enquiry be instituted and the truth ascertained. If then my statements are found to be incorrect, I shall make appropriate amends.

The Bengal Provincial League further says: "His (my) one-sided and provocative statements, among other things, have contributed to the continuance of disturbances in Calcutta and other places." If my statements are one-sided, the best way of contradicting them is to state the other side. My statements are confined to East Bengal. I would like to know if the Hindus in that area indulged in murder, loot, arson, forced conversion and forced marriages. The public would like to have some instances of these. In the ab-



sence of instances, it is unconvincing to call my statements one-sided.

As for the present phase of the Calcutta riots, it commenced on the 23rd when acid was thrown at tram cars, and the conductors refused to ply the buses without military protection. My first detailed statement before the Press Conference at Calcutta was made on the evening of the 26th and appeared in the morning papers on the 27th. I, therefore, see no connection between the recrudescence of riots in Calcutta and my statement appearing on the 27th. As a matter of fact trouble was brewing in Calcutta since many days. It may be said that it never stopped, except in its extent and intensity, ever since it started in September last. As for elsewhere, I do not know of any place or places where communal trouble started after my statements which were made on the 26th in Calcutta and on the 29th in Delhi and appeared in the Press on subsequent dates. If there are any such places, they should have been specifically mentioned for the public to judge.

As for the official evidence, I know as a matter of fact that neither the Commissioner of Chittagong Division nor the military officers had any extensive, or, for that matter, any tour in the affected areas in the interior, prior to the 25th. The District Magistrate may have gone to some near places before that date. On the 25th the District Magistrate of Noakhali went some way in the interior and was instrumental in rescuing a forcibly married Hindu girl whom he brought with himself in the evening, having effected the arrest of the so-called Muslim bridegroom and his father. After the rescue he had to post four armed guards in the village to afford protection to the father and the uncle of the girl who had been forced to embrace Islam, and other converted Hindus in the village. I am surprised that the same Magistrate could say in his statement of the 27th that "Rape, abduction, and forcible marriages are rare and no such cases were brought to my notice." Here is what Sri Lalitchandra Das, M.L.C. writes in a contribution in *Hindustan Standard* of the 29th last:



"I was invited in a conference held in the Commilla Circuit house on 22nd October last in which the leading citizens of the town of both the communities were called to meet the Hon'ble Ministers for Commerce and Justice who were accompanied by a host of M.L.As. and M.L.Cs. In their presence and in the Conference, the District Magistrate of Tipperah called to make a statement by Hon'ble Mr. Shamsuddin Ahmed, Minister, made a statement. He clearly and unequivocally spoke of mass conversion and of several cases of abduction of women and forced marriages carried on by the mob hooligans of a particular community to whom no cause for offence or aggression was given. He even admitted that there was plan behind this aggression and that ex-servicemen led."

In conclusion, I would say that so far as I am concerned this is my last statement on East Bengal. I shall not henceforth answer any criticism from whatever quarter but wait till an impartial inquiry is set up which I believe should be set up as soon as possible.

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*Indian National Congress, Fifty-fourth Session*

Friends,

I am grateful for the honour you have conferred on me by electing me to preside over your deliberations this year. I am not so vain as to imagine that I am the fittest person for this signal distinction, nor will I insult you out of mistaken modesty by suggesting that you have elected one who is altogether unworthy of the task you have called upon him to undertake. Our veteran leaders, who have filled this office with distinction in the past, have now other burdens to shoulder and are no longer free exclusively to devote themselves to the service of this organisation. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who piloted our ship through the most perilous voyage it has yet undertaken in its stormy and hazardous career, needed much-deserved respite from the cares of office. I was free to devote myself to your service, and you have chosen me as your first servant. Though I am fully sensible of the great honour, I am even more sensible of the great responsibility it carries. Gandhiji has called it a crown of thorns, and a crown of thorns it is, more so today than ever, when our ship is nearing the harbour which has been so heavily mined. But I have no doubt that if we remain true to our mission and if we stand united, no power on earth can prevent us from reaching our goal.

### RETROSPECT

We are meeting after full six years—years momentous in the history of the world, and no less momentous in the history of our own struggle for freedom. During the period, we came twice into open conflict with the British Government. In 1941, we started the Individual Civil Disobedience movement to vindicate the right of

every Indian freely to express his opinion about the war in which India was dragged against her will. It succeeded in attaining this limited objective.

The second was the all-comprehensive "Quit India" struggle. When the Congress on 1st January, 1930, re-defined its goal as the attainment of Purna Swaraj or complete independence, it was a notice to the foreigner to quit. But it was an indefinite notice ignored by him and not enforced by us. But as conveyed in 1942, it was a peremptory order to quit. Caught in the net of her own imperialist ambitions, Britain had involved herself in a second world war. She was ill-prepared for a major conflict, and soon found herself in a life-and-death struggle. Her reaction to it on the different fronts is a lesson in democracy. While on her own soil where the people were sovereign, she rose heroically to the occasion, despite the fact that the threat there was the most serious, here in India where her rule was enforced against the wishes of the people, she lost her nerve and grew panicky and demoralised. Frightened by the threat of Japanese invasion, the authorities drove out people from their homes and fields, destroyed their crops and even deprived them of their means of livelihood. The people so harassed could not even complain. All channels of free expression and association, the platform and the press, were effectively gagged by virtual martial law. The choice before the country was to suffer all these indignities lying low, or to take up the challenge and offer resistance. The Congress could not possibly ignore this challenge. If it had, it would have acted as the Social Democratic Parties did in European countries threatened with Fascist and Nazi aggression. Social Democracy failed ingloriously without striking a blow in the defence of its ideal. Gandhiji, at the time of this supreme crisis, decided to take up the challenge. He invited the Congress to die fighting, if necessary. The Congress and the nation had the wisdom to follow his lead.

Many wise politicians shook their heads in doubt. For an unarmed people to fight Great Britain at a time when all its armed might was mobilised, when the in-

exhaustible resources of America were at its disposal, appeared sheer folly. But then these wise men forgot that when the Congress under Gandhiji's lead took to revolutionary politics, it abandoned conventional political wisdom. It dared to risk and achieve. Was the Congress wise when it made the Khilafat issue, which it scarcely understood, its own? Was it again wise to resort to Salt Satyagraha to achieve independence? There was apparently no connection between salt and independence. And what wisdom could there have been in Gandhiji, walking with a flock of unarmed followers for 21 days, to pick up a pinch of salt on the sea-shore? What political or any other wisdom could there be in Pandit Motilal Nehru, manufacturing salt in his study, in a laboratory test tube, on a spirit lamp from a lump of clay? What wisdom was there in selecting individual satyagrahis to walk from place to place shouting anti-war slogans till they were arrested? The fact is, the Congress under Gandhiji's lead has never done the conventionally obvious thing, and if it does so before the freedom fight is over and complete independence won, it will have missed its revolutionary role.

After every movement, it has seemed that the Congress lay exhausted and prostrate. The foreign Government thought it crushed for good. But after the struggle this seemingly defeated Congress, when occasion arose, showed itself more alive than ever and ready to exercise the added strength it had gathered from its suffering and sacrifice.

The August 1942 struggle was over. The British had not disappeared. They were there. The nation appeared to lie prostrate. In those dark days many a false prophet taunted, "Did we not say so?" But as soon as the jail gates were opened on Gandhiji and the members of the Working Committee, there was no sign of either depression or frustration. What we saw was a new and surging life everywhere. The leaders' march to Simla to negotiate with a Government that had boasted that the Congress was crushed, was a triumphant march, and not the march of the defeated and the humiliated. Then

came the elections, central and provincial. Nobody had any doubt about the results. Those who had seen no wisdom in Congress politics lost no time in coming back to the fold and offered themselves for Assembly seats and positions of power which they thought might soon be available. They did not want to be left behind. They hurried back to the fold and were accepted too !

The elections proved that the nation's faith in the Congress had increased. Those who had fought and suffered triumphed. They had their reward. But many of those who had striven most and suffered most were no more with us. They paid for their patriotism with their precious lives. Today when we are assembled to take stock of the past and shape policies for the future, let us not forget to pay to the memory of these brave soldiers in the national struggle, whether known or unknown, our humble tribute of honour and respect. They suffered that others may enjoy. They died that others may live.

#### THE SIMLA CONFERENCE AND AFTER

The members of the Working Committee were released in June, 1945, in pursuance of a change in the policy of the British Government. The Viceroy called a conference at Simla of representatives of the main political parties to discuss the formation of a National Government at the Centre. The Conference failed because it was not allowed to function. The Viceroy chose to yield to the fanciful demands of the Muslim League, even though he did not think them fair and reasonable. The League leader would not allow any non-League Muslim, even a non-Congress Muslim, a nominee of the Viceroy, to be included in the cabinet. It was difficult to understand why the conference was ever called at such expense and trouble. There was disappointment and anger in the country. Many asked, how could those pledged to the 'Quit India' resolution consent to a conference called on the basis of the present reactionary constitution? But a satyagrahi is slow to fight and quick to come to terms when he sees an opportunity for a

peaceful and honourable solution. If his fundamentals are conceded, he is willing to sit at the table with his opponents to discuss matters. Moreover, at this time the food problem was becoming acute and it was expected that a National Government could tackle it much better than the bureaucracy that had so woefully bungled in the past. The country also needed a period of quiet and rest to take stock of the national situation.

The Simla Conference failed, but the British Government announced that soon they would devise some other workable plan for the solution of the Indian problem. The British bureaucracy is a slow-moving machine. Moreover, the British always work for time. A favourable turn in the home or international situation may enable them to avoid inconvenient commitments. However, there was no favourable turn. The general elections in England went against the reactionary Tories. Labour came in power with an overwhelming majority. The International situation was charged with dangerous possibilities. India was the weakest spot in the Empire. A solution was called for. A roving Parliamentary Committee came for the purpose of study and inquiry. On its heels came the Cabinet Mission, headed by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Pethick-Lawrence. After a series of discussions with leaders of the main political parties, the Cabinet Mission announced their plan, in their Statement of May 16th, for the convening of a Constituent Assembly to frame a Constitution of a free and United India and for the establishment of an Interim Government at the centre.

The history of the weary negotiations that went on for nearly three months in Delhi and Simla is too well known for me to repeat here. The net result was that though the plan for the Constituent Assembly was accepted by both Congress and League no Interim Government could be formed at the Centre. The League leaders were so disappointed at the refusal of the Viceroy to invite them to form the Government without the Congress, that they afterwards announced that the Muslim League would not participate even in the Consti-

tuent Assembly. The Viceroy, therefore, in consultation with the British Cabinet, decided to invite the Congress as the majority party to form the Interim Government. The task of bringing the Muslim League in was wisely left to the Congress. The Congress accepted the offer and the President, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, contacted Mr. Jinnah. But as usual nothing could be gained from that quarter. The Congress was, therefore, constrained to accept office in September, 1946.

Soon the Viceroy began talks with the League leaders on his own initiative, without the consent of his colleagues in the Cabinet. Such a procedure was not contemplated. The offer made to the Congress was unconditional. Nevertheless, the Congress, always willing and anxious for unity, did not object. Through the Viceroy the Congress and the League resumed negotiations. The result again was failure. However, in the end, the League accepted the Viceroy's invitation to nominate five out of fourteen members in the Interim Government. Thus the League representatives are today in the National Government, working as colleagues with our own representatives. It is hoped that facing the same difficulties and solving the same problems, a workable unity will be evolved that will carry us over these troublous times.

### CONSTRUCTIVE REVOLUTION

I believe that if the Congress had not taken up the challenge of British imperialism in August 1942, we would not be occupying the position we do today; nor indeed would the Muslim League and other minorities, though some of them may not like to admit the fact. True we have not yet achieved our goal of Purna Swaraj. But our representatives and leaders have broken into the citadel of power. This is not the end of foreign domination, but it is surely the beginning of the end, provided we know how to utilise our opportunities. However, even when we have achieved our goal of complete independence we must not think that our task is done. National liberty is precious indeed. It is



the very breath of a nation's life. But however important, it is a negative achievement—a removal of external shackles. It is merely the hindrance of a hindrance. It is quite possible that when an individual's shackles are removed, he may use his new-found freedom to his own injury. If we are wise we will not rest content merely with the removal of external restraints, but will so order our affairs that the freedom we gain is translated into concrete good to our people. This means that our revolutionary zeal, even while it destroys the old order, must constantly achieve creative expression in constructive activity.

This constructive effort should be nothing new for us. Our revolutionary movement, based as it is on non-violence, is unique in history. Usually, political revolutions have aimed at the destruction of the old order. Their strategy has been designed to capture power. All constructive effort to remould the nation's life has been done after the old order was completely destroyed and power captured. This process has inevitably led not to one but a series of revolutions before things could settle down and constructive effort begun. Not unoften, the process has led to civil war and ultimately to dictatorship. Both civil war and dictatorship have a tendency to defeat the aims of a revolution. It was so in the French and Russian Revolutions.

The Congress under Gandhiji's lead has avoided over-emphasis on mere destruction or on the capture of power. It has, on the other hand, laid great emphasis on constructive programme. Its destructive and constructive programmes have been worked side by side for the last 26 years. Indeed, for Gandhiji the only effective preparation for civil disobedience is the intensive carrying out of the constructive programme. Now that Congressmen are at the helm of affairs in many provinces, and even at the Centre, we have some sort of a national government, it should not be difficult to intensify our effort and realise the full possibilities of the constructive programme, as enunciated by Gandhiji and accepted by the Congress.



## DEMOCRACY AND NON-VIOLENCE

The content of our Swaraj has been getting clearer and clearer for us as our national struggle has progressed. Long ago we decided against the tactics of mere destruction and capture of power. We, therefore, discarded the use of the pistol and the bomb. We decided that our revolution must be an open conspiracy and it must progressively bring in the masses. It must, therefore, necessarily be non-secretive and non-violent. A revolution, brought about by the masses, and that non-violently, implies democracy. Our Congress organisation, therefore, has a democratic constitution. As a matter of fact, if democracy is to be real and effective, and not merely formal and institutional, it must be based on non-violence. And non-violence, if it is not a mere form or lip-expression, must necessarily lead to democracy. Non-violence and dictatorship are contradictory. We cannot today change this democratic character of the Congress, nor will it be desirable to do so. Let it, therefore, be clear that we are pledged to political democracy and our Swaraj shall be democratic. It shall not be the rule of an individual, however great, or a family, however glorious. Nor shall it be the Swaraj under one particular caste, creed or class. It shall be the rule of the people, by the people, for the people.

We have seen that political democracy the world over tends to become a mere form, if it is not broad-based on some sort of economic equality. The democratic vote ceases to have much meaning in a society where there are great inequalities of wealth. We know that the smaller countries of Europe, like Norway, Sweden and Denmark, enjoy a more real democracy than the big capitalist countries, for the simple reason that their (small countries') democracy rests on a larger measure of economic equality.

But economic equality may be of the Communist order based on centralised big industry, or it may be democratic and based upon a fair degree of decentralisation. I believe that economic equality in a society, whose economic system rests exclusively on big indus-

try, inevitably leads to the concentration of power in the hands of a few. It leads to bureaucratic and dictatorial exercise of power. The rulers in that case not only regulate the political but also the economic life of the people. If political power has a tendency to corrupt the holders of power, this tendency is doubly increased by the combination of political and economic power in the same hands. Capitalism killed democracy because the capitalist class wielded, directly or indirectly, political power. Communism puts in the hands of the political dictator and bureaucrat the entire control of economic power. Herein lies as great a danger to democracy as under capitalism.

### DECENTRALISATION OF INDUSTRY

Therefore, if democracy is to survive, it must discover a means of avoiding concentration of economic power in the hands of the ruler or rulers, however selected or elected. Even a political democracy can be a dictatorship if there are no spheres of free activity left to the individual. The historical role of the Congress in the economic field has been its bold advocacy of decentralised industry. Ever since the Bengal partition movement, our political thinkers have stressed the importance of reviving village and cottage industry. After Gandhiji's advent in Indian politics, this advocacy has gained emphasis and has been translated into a concrete programme of national reconstruction. We have, therefore, at this stage clearly to define the content of our economic Swaraj which must be in the direction of as much decentralisation as is possible under the present circumstances. Nor may we forget that decentralisation alone will help effectively to solve the problem of chronic unemployment of the vast majority of our agricultural population.

The Congress appointed in 1939 a Planning Committee under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. This Committee has been at work for several years. It has collected facts and figures. It is time that its labours are utilised. But these cannot be utilised

unless the Congress makes up its mind as to what industries are to be centralised and what decentralised. Unless that is done each province will go its own way. I am afraid that already there is a kind of competition, even among the Congress provinces, in the field of big industry. Each province wants to introduce as many mills and factories as possible. We had thought that the cloth industry was the one most eminently suited for decentralisation. But even here each provincial government is vying with the other to set up new cloth mills. Some people believe that in the present state of scarcity of cloth all means of increased production must be utilised. They, however, fail to see that this necessarily creates new capitalist vested interests. As a khadi worker I believe that with less capital and less effort and in a shorter time more can be accomplished by a systematic encouragement of the charkha and the handloom than by opening new mills. I have taken the example of the cloth industry. But it is time that we took counsel among ourselves and decided what industries might best be worked on centralised and what on decentralised basis.

When I talk of decentralised industry, I do not necessarily mean the application of mere hand power. Electric power may well be utilised for increasing the scope and efficiency of the worker in his own home and village. That this decentralised industry will eliminate periodical waste of national wealth consequent on industrial conflicts, strikes and lock-outs, is too obvious to be mentioned. To the extent these conflicts are avoided, there is good neighbourliness among the people. This decentralised industry may be organised on a co-operative basis. There should be production and distribution co-operatives. If production co-operatives are not immediately possible, distribution co-operatives can certainly be started by public bodies and the provincial governments. The village worker does not find so much difficulty in producing goods as in marketing them.

## AGRICULTURE AND OUR FOOD PROBLEM

Our agriculture too must largely follow the pattern of decentralised industry. It must chiefly consist of peasant proprietorships, with a provision that no plot shall be sub-divided, whether on account of inheritance, debt or any other cause, beyond what would maintain a village family. Decentralised industry and agriculture must supplement and complement each other. The latter too should be managed, as far as possible, on co-operative basis, both for farming and marketing purposes.

The Congress is pledged to the elimination of the middleman between the tenant and the State. Recently, in response to a non-official resolution moved in the A.I.C.C., it was decided by the Working Committee that the provincial governments be asked to send to the A.I.C.C. office their schemes for the abolition of the Zamindari system. The material received should be systematised and placed before the Working Committee for consideration. I hope the direction of the Working Committee in this matter will be speedily given effect to and a body of experts appointed to prepare a comprehensive plan for the elimination of the middleman in our agricultural economy. This body of experts may also suggest plans which would meet, with suitable modifications, the different requirements of the various provinces. In the U. P. an official Bill will soon be introduced in the legislature for the abolition of the Zamindari system. A committee has already been appointed to draft a Bill on the lines of the resolution which has been passed by the U. P. Legislature. It is hoped that the bill will have a smooth passage. The zamindars should have no objection as the Bill provides for adequate compensation.

The food problem which assumed dangerous proportions during the War continues to be our great concern even today. We are still dependent on what foreign countries may choose to dole out to us. This dependence on the foreigner must be eliminated where the most primary needs of existence are concerned. With

appropriate agricultural reform it should not be difficult to feed the present population of India and any immediate increase. Our agricultural production is extremely low. In Japan they raise per acre 3909 lbs. of rice while India gets only 939 lbs.; of wheat Japan gets 2010 lbs. per acre as against 774 in our country. Here is a great deal of leeway to make by well-directed agricultural research. There is enough waste land that can be brought under cultivation by well and canal irrigation and proper manures. There should also be a judicious readjustment between food and money crops, and as far as possible, the profits to the cultivator from the two sources should be equalised. If that is not done it will not do merely to advise, induce or oblige the cultivator to abandon the better paid for the worse paid crops. The best plan to avoid famine and the threat of famine in the future is to divide the country in such agricultural regions or units, big or small, as would be self-sufficient so far as the essentials of human nutrition are concerned. Care must be taken that these regions produce what may constitute a scientifically balanced diet. The health of our agricultural population, the backbone of our nation, cannot be improved unless the peasant has two square meals a day consisting of food which is properly adjusted to form a scientifically balanced diet. Proper food is the first condition of rural health and hygiene. In the matter of balanced diet more research is needed. But enough has been done, thanks to Gandhiji's efforts, to make a useful beginning.

At the Centre we have today our esteemed leader Babu Rajendra Prasad, a careful and conscientious Minister in charge of the Department of Food, and I have no doubt that he will not only enable us to tide over our present difficulties, but ensure such arrangements for the future as would never oblige us to go abegging for our food at foreign doors.

If democracy in the modern world is not possible without a considerable economic levelling up and down, it is no less inconsistent with international rivalries resulting in periodic global conflicts. In war there is al-

ways a concentration of power. War increases the power of political bosses and bureaucrats. Civil liberties are curtailed. The rights of free association and free expression of opinion, whether on the platform or through the press and the radio, are greatly diminished. Modern wars tend to be global. Few countries can keep their neutrality. Even in neutral countries the fear of war diminishes civil liberties and increases State control. If, therefore, democracy is to function properly and fully, international strife and war must yield place to mutual good-will and co-operation. However, this is a problem which cannot be solved by the attitude of a single nation towards war. As long as there are empires, whether fascist or democratic or socialist, war must remain the only means of settling international rivalries. I have said socialist empires. It will be objected that socialism and imperialism are a contradiction in terms. But so also are democracy and imperialism. And yet we have imperialist democracies. Like democracy, socialism can in practice be consistent with political and economic imperialism. Bolshevist Russia has yet to convince the world that it has abandoned the Czarist policy of nibbling at its neighbours. The Socialist Government of England shows no convincing signs of relinquishing its hold upon its imperial possessions. What steps have been taken in India are halting and tardy and give rise to a suspicion that they are more due to the international situation than to any genuine desire to shed imperialism.

To sum up then, the historical evolution of our freedom movement, pledged as it is to non-violence and the good of the masses, demands a social order, free from exploitation, functioning democratically and turned to international co-operation and peace. Such a society will be in consonance with the highest ideals of the age and time we live in. The Congress under Gandhiji's lead has been working for these objects. Now it must define the objects more clearly and work more consciously towards their realisation and utilise its newly acquired power towards that end.

## NATIONAL UNITY

Today we have some kind of a national government at the centre and provinces have their popularly elected governments. In a short time we shall be assembling to form a new constitution for India. Freedom, if not achieved, is surely in sight. The British can no longer deny it to us, whatever their intentions. If today we miss our goal, the fault shall be ours. It will be due to the mistakes of commission and omission we make at this critical juncture. The greatest danger to a patient is not when the disease is active but when he is convalescing. The doctor's vigilance is relaxed and he has to take care of himself. We are in that critical condition; and the worst of it is that our enemies are clever and vigilant. The greatest strength of British imperialism in India is that it has been possible for it to carry out its nefarious designs through the instrumentality of the Indians themselves. India was conquered by Indian money, Indian resources, Indian soldiers and often with Indian brains. Our tragedy has been our divisions and differences and our tendency to subordinate larger national interests to those of caste, creed and party. We give to the smaller units the loyalty that is due to the whole. Herein lies our greatest weakness.

Of all the political virtues, unity is the greatest and the most important, provided this unity is not superimposed by force but is natural and spontaneous. In this the British excel not only the Indians but also other European nations. At every critical moment of their history the British have ignored religious, party and class differences. Even as early as the 16th century, when sectarian differences led to religious wars and the Catholic hated the Protestant more heartily than either of them hated the non-Christian, as soon as the English shores were threatened by the Spanish Armada, sent by a Catholic Emperor, English Catholics, even though persecuted, stood shoulder to shoulder with their Protestant countrymen to repel the foreign invasion. This has continued up to the present time. In the last war, the Socialists had no hesitation to work under reaction-



ary, snobbish, caste-ridden Churchill, when the national emergency made it necessary for them to do so. But in India small differences produce unbridgeable gulfs. Common points are forgotten, petty disagreements over-emphasised. We must, if we have to live and progress as a nation, check this inherent centrifugal tendency.

At present the greatest dangers to our freedom are the communal differences, specially between the two major communities, the Hindus and Muslims. The foreigner has taken the fullest advantage of these in the past. Today he finds it his last trump card. He is playing it cleverly and subtly. It is unhistorical, unscientific, unethnic and unnatural to think that the Hindus and the Muslims are two nations. Their interests, social, political and economic, are identical. Their common points are innumerable. Their differences can be easily counted and are only skin deep. The foreigner cannot distinguish the Hindu from the Muslim except by the accident of dress, and that too only if he is familiar with sartorial differences which change from province to province. India, outside India, is considered one whole. No conqueror ever thought himself safe until he had brought the whole of it under his sway. No native ruler ever thought his kingdom complete and rounded off until he had established his hegemony over the whole of this ancient land. Only those periods of Indian history have been most productive when the whole of India was united under one Government, whether it or again under the Moghuls. Even though the present alien rule has dwarfed Indian genius by an unnatural system of foreign education and the denial of all opportunities of initiative, yet by the mere fact of uniting India under one common misrule, it has released the creative energy of the nation in various fields of thought and action. There has been an Indian renaissance. To think of India then, as divided into two nations, Hindu and Muslim, is retrograde and reactionary. It is dividing what nature and history have united. I have my own grand-nephews and nieces in Sind who are Muslims. They love me as well as do



my Hindu grand children. I cannot imagine that I as a Hindu am an Indian and they as Muslims belong to a different nationality. One of them, a pretty little bride, wrote to me recently thus: "We offer you our sincerest congratulations on your attaining the *highest honour which any Indian can aspire to*. May you long adorn the Congress Gaddi with distinction and service. We are, of course, staunch Muslim Leaguers, but we pray that here should be a rapprochement between the Congress and the League." (Italics mine).

In this connection I would like to repeat to Indian Muslims the words of my predecessor in office. In his presidential address the Maulana Saheb said: "Do we, Indian Muslims, view the free India of the future with suspicion and mistrust or with courage and confidence? .... No present declaration for the future, no constitutional safeguards can be a remedy for our doubts and fears. We are then forced to tolerate the presence of a third power. This third power is already entrenched here and has no intention of withdrawing, and if we follow the path of fear and suspicion, we must need look forward to its continuance. But if we are convinced that for us fear and doubt have no place, and that we must view the future with courage and confidence, then our course of action becomes quite clear. We find ourselves in a new world which is free from the dark shadows of doubt and vacillation, inaction and apathy, and where the light of faith and determination, action and enthusiasm never fails." To this, as a student of history, I would only add that it was not want of faith and determination that made Islam great. Today in India the Muslim League works in fear and suspicion and infects the whole Muslim community with it. When Muslims came into India from beyond the mountains, they came only in their thousands. They were not afraid of the teeming millions of Hindus. They came in the might of their faith and enthusiasm. Today they form a fourth of the population. It is wrong to say that they are a minority. As the Maulana Saheb rightly put it, "In the texture of Indian politics nothing is further

removed from the truth than that the Indian Muslims occupy the position of a political minority. Politically speaking the word minority does not mean a group that is numerically smaller and therefore entitled to special protection. It means a group that is so small in numbers and so lacking in other qualities that give strength, that it has no confidence in its own capacity to protect itself from the much larger group that surrounds it.... Thus this is not a question merely of numbers, other factors also count.... In four out of eleven provinces, there is a Muslim majority. If British Baluchistan is added, there are five provinces with Muslim majorities. Even if we are compelled at present to consider the question on the basis of religious grouping, the position of the Muslim is not that of a minority only. If they are a minority in seven provinces, they are in a majority in five. This being so, there is absolutely no reason why they should be oppressed by the feeling of being a minority."

I, therefore, hold that a Hindu who believes a Muslim to be an alien not only does wrong to his religion but is an enemy of the freedom and progress of India. On the other hand, if a Muslim who is flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, believes and acts as if he were an alien on Indian soil, he does equal harm to his community and to the nation. We have almost everything in common except religion which should be a personal matter. To fight on questions of faith is the way of a barbarian. I know the present fight between Hindus and Muslims is not a religious fight. It is purely a communal conflict. It has nothing to do with political or economic issues that concern the masses of both the communities. The masses act as tools in the hands of the clever and often unscrupulous politicians. But whatever the causes, we must recognise the fact of the existing tension and bitterness, and steer our course so as to avoid any major conflict.

I have already in my public statements, made after my election, said that the Congress must yield to the demands of the minorities, Muslim or any other, but

not at the expense of the good of the nation. Such yielding in the past has largely been responsible for our present troubles. Also when facts are conflicting and confusing, it is best to fall back upon basic moral principles. Some compromise on principles may be made only when there is no doubt about facts. The basic principles involved in the communal conflict are those of nationalism and democracy. Nationalism historically is a higher principle than communalism and democracy higher than sectional domination. In whatever, therefore, we do, we must not allow the communal and undemocratic principles to triumph over nationalism and democracy. Viewed thus, I have no doubt that the Congress was wrong in accepting separate electorates which are anti-national and undemocratic. I believe much of our present trouble could have been avoided had we boldly refused to accept the undemocratic and anti-national principle of separate electorates. The communal conflict has today assumed not only a serious but a vicious aspect. It is quite possible that to avoid immediate trouble we may accept principles that cut at the root of nationality and democracy. If we do so, we shall not only be betraying the nation, but ultimately the Muslims and other communities. I hope our elders will guard themselves and the country against being coerced or cajoled into making any anti-national and undemocratic compromises in the future.

I was recently in East Bengal and Bihar. It would be criminal for me to mince matters. It would be a dereliction of public duty. Those who were responsible for the tragedy in East Bengal had given the masses an idea that Pakistan could be established by force—*Larke Lenge Pakistan, Märke Lenge Pakistan!* If once the idea enters into the mass mind that the communal problem can be solved by force, it will be an evil day, not only for India but for all the communities concerned. Non-violence is a new creed. It may not be over-burdened. It can, in the present circumstances, succeed if there is some kind of restraint observed by

the two parties in the conflict. And if one party uses extraordinary and unconventional weapons, the other party too, in sheer self-defence, will be obliged to use the same weapons. Those who preached mass conversions, forcible marriages, etc., were playing with fire. I know as a matter of fact that Muslim priests officiated at this diabolical use of violence and coercion. I would repeat here what I said in one of my statements on East Bengal after my return from there. "Some people seem to think that loss of life is the greatest calamity that can befall a human being. But the greatest calamity for honourable people is to be obliged to forswear their faith at the point of the pistol. If all the people forcibly converted and all the women abducted and forcibly married had been done to death, in my opinion, that would have been a lesser tragedy than their yielding to force." I am an absolute believer in non-violence. But if the strain that was put on people in East Bengal had been put upon me, I do not know what my reflex action would have been. If sensitive and educated individuals are liable, under extreme provocation, to yield to undesirable reflexes, much more so are groups. Whoever therefore preaches, sanctions, encourages, or uses violence, specially of the sort that was practised in East Bengal, be he an individual or be it a group, party or community, does the greatest disservice to the nation. He works against humanity. If we must run at each other's throat let us do so cleanly and bravely, as befits men, and not in gruesome cowardly ways which degrade us to the level of beasts.

If I must warn communities against the use of initial violence to settle their differences, I must warn them no less against the use of violence by way of retaliation and reprisal as was the case in Bihar. Two evils do not cancel each other. And these reprisals and retaliations fall on innocent victims, even if the original attack was against those who really had done wrong and deserved punishment. But as a matter of fact in communal violence, whether provocative or retaliatory, only the poor and the helpless suffer. The authors of

the trouble always manage to go scot free. In civil strife, as in war between nations, the unrestrained and diabolical use of violence will succeed only in producing the equivalent of the atom bomb which will annihilate both Hindus and Muslims.

The Central Government, failing to interfere in Bengal, the provinces became virtually independent. The neighbouring province of Bihar under the circumstances was entitled to protest against what happened to the Biharis in Calcutta. The Bihar Government would also have been entitled to warn the Bengal Government against the probable repercussions of what was being perpetrated against the Hindus in East Bengal with, what looked almost like the connivance of the Government. The Bihar Government should have made it plain to Bengal that the Hindus in Bihar were profoundly agitated over the fate of their co-religionists in Bengal and that with the best will in the world the Government might not be able to control the situation if the feelings of the people were strained beyond a certain pitch. The Hindus of Bihar should have agitated and insisted upon their Government to take up that position. That would have been the proper and the constitutional way. If the Centre fails to make itself responsible for internal security in the provinces, I am clearly of the opinion that popular governments in the provinces must take up such matters with each other in future. If they do so they are likely to arrive at a better arrangement than if the communities take the law into their own hands and indulge in reprisals.

Violence is ugly and futile in any case, but the unorganized hysteric violence of the mob is worse than futile. It is fatal to the very cause on whose behalf it is invoked. I am afraid that if the present orgies of provocation and retaliation continue, the Muslim League leadership will soon be unable to control its followers, even if it should decide to. And so might the Congress, though the Congress leadership has done its best to save the people from this hysteria of violence. If that happens then Indians will be divided into two armed camps

of communal fanatics and the Britisher will stand over them both with his bayonet. The day of India's freedom will be indefinitely postponed.

If we are to be worthy of freedom we must learn to live together and respect each other's sentiments. Hindu and Muslim minorities are scattered all over this country. No amount of police or military protection can permanently and effectively protect them from the wrath of the majority communities if the latter lose all sense of moral obligation towards them. If no Hindu's life, property and honour are safe in a Muslim-majority area and no Muslim's in a Hindu-majority area, then civilised life becomes an impossibility. Even Mr. Jinnah's dream of Pakistan, though it has made the problem what it is, holds out no prospect of its solution; for it leaves the minorities where they are. Did his scheme envisage a total and wholesale transfer of populations and the concentration of all the Muslims of India in one compact territory, so that no Hindu, Sikh, Christian or Parsi is left in the Muslim State and no Muslim left anywhere else in India, the scheme might at least have the merit of being a logical solution of the problem, however costly, tragic and inhuman it might be to carry it out. Even if the Muslims must have a theocratic state of their own, they cannot be allowed to impose it on Hindu, Sikh and other minorities in their territory. These minorities have at least as much right of self-determination as the Muslims claim for themselves in India as a whole. Nor can the rest of India be reasonably expected to harbour large sections of population in its midst who openly repudiate their citizenship in that state. If the Muslim League claims Pakistan on religious and communal grounds, let it face all its implications and not try to eat the cake and yet have it. This is a terrible solution, as detrimental in the long run to the Muslim interests as to the Hindu but it is a logical consequence of the communalism with which the League is infecting its followers and which is making a common civilized life difficult. But in no case must we allow the poison of communal strife further to dis-

integrate our national and corporate life. In no case must we allow ourselves to be bullied and black-mailed by a section of the population into sacrificing the just rights of others.

I hope, however, that the leaders of the fanatics among both the communities will have more sense and humanity than to take recourse to desperate and mediaeval remedies. The problem is easy of solution if only we accept the obvious fact that if there are two nations in India, they are the exploited and the exploiting of both or all the communities. The Hindus and Muslims have a common enemy, and that is poverty, disease, and ignorance. If only we realize what we really are, there need be no quarrel between us.

I have laboured this point at length, because this is the greatest stumbling block in our path to freedom and progress. Even at this late hour I hope, now that the Muslim League is in the Central Government and shares responsibility with the Congress, the orgies that were enacted in Calcutta, East Bengal, Bihar and to a lesser degree elsewhere, will be nightmares of the past. We shall write anew on a clean slate of brotherly love and co-operation as children of a common motherland.

#### INDIAN STATES

If the Hindu-Muslim question gives us a headache, the Indian States' problem is no less distressing. Like the communal, the State question is easy of solution, if we think in terms of India and not in terms of any section or community. The princes must realize that India cannot be half free and half slave, and that in a free India they cannot exist and carry on as they do now. Their power today is buttressed by the foreigner who misuses them for his imperial purposes. Where his purpose is not served, he treats them with scant courtesy. The Indian princes have to adjust their conscience to the dictates of the political department. Those who might be trustees of their people's welfare have become puppets of a foreign power. Under such circumstances, their high-sounding titles, their



paraphernalia of ancient pomp and pageantry appear ugly, empty and ridiculous. Their lavish personal and family expenditure on their fanciful and very often harmful wants impoverishes the already starving masses who are denied even the rudimentary rights of citizenship.

The States people have to tolerate a double-distilled slavery. The masters who harass them are themselves slaves. But these masters seem to like their chains because it enables them to live in ignoble ease and luxury. If they only knew their real self-interest, they would, instead of relying upon the precarious help of a swiftly fading imperialism, put their trust in the affections of a free, happy and prosperous people. The States people have yet some affection for the person of their rulers. Political India has no objection to their existence if only they would live and act as democratic, constitutional monarchs. In this they might learn a lesson from their nominal over-lord, the King of England. He is loved and respected because he has ceased to rule. Because he functions in accordance with the will of his people, he, as king, can do no wrong. His royalty merely symbolises the unity and greatness of his people who are free to manage their own affairs democratically. He is thus assigned a noble role in the economy of his nation. The last king, now the Duke of Windsor, would not cross the will of the chosen representatives of his people even in such a personal matter as his marriage. Let the Indian princes act in the same spirit, and the princely order will yet have a long lease of life of peaceful and patriotic service.

If all this is true, and true it is, then the Kashmere Durbar was not well advised in its recent actions. It has done distinct disservice to the princely order. In slighting Jawaharlal Nehru, a prince among patriots, the Kashmere Dewan slighted the whole Indian Nation. It is no less deplorable that Hyderabad which claims to be the premier state in India should deny its subjects the elementary rights of citizenship which even British



imperialism is obliged to concede. What the people of India, which includes the Indian States, want from the princes are not platitudes when they meet in Durbars and the Princes' Chamber, but action towards the emancipation of their people on whom their arbitrary rule weighs heavy. Let their power and glory come from the happiness of a prosperous and free people. That should be for them an aim worth living for and not the present life of ignoble ease and comfort, and their role of imperial servitude. In this they might well emulate the example of the Ruler of Aundh who, by conceding their just rights, has endeared himself to his people.

#### THE CANKER OF UNTOUCHABILITY

No less menacing to the freedom and progress of our nation is the canker of untouchability. It mainly affects the Hindu community. But it is such an anachronism and so inhuman that its continuance is bound to poison the whole of our national life. Our demand for freedom and equality loses much of its point when we tolerate within our own society the most galling and the most humiliating form of inequality. That in European lands and white colonies we should be considered and treated as untouchable is, I believe, Nature's revenge and moral retribution for breaking one of her fundamental laws, that of human equality. I believe that the reformer has done enough to rouse the conscience of the Hindu community against this evil to entitle the law to set up its machinery for its removal. The provincial governments must penalise all public exhibitions of untouchability. No public place, be it a road, club, a place of recreation or instruction, or a place of eating, should be closed to our Harijan brothers. Also, I think, provincial governments can and should legislate that wherever the majority of worshippers in a particular temple desire the same to be opened to the Harijans, it shall be so opened. In every other way the Harijans should be encouraged to take their rightful place of

equality with the so-called caste Hindus. There should be perfect equality. Personally I believe in a classless and casteless society brought about by non-violent means, for violence is bound to create new castes and classes. They originated with violence, physical and psychological. Equality and democracy are synonymous with non-violence.

#### POWER POLITICS

There are yet other pitfalls, which we must guard against. In our struggle our competition so far has been in the field of service, suffering and sacrifice. Now that positions of power and patronage are available to us let us not kick the ladder by which we have ascended to these positions. In a country where freedom is long established, power politics may not so soon and so easily degrade the nation as to bring it to the brink of ruin. But in a country whose political independence has not yet been fully achieved but rather hangs in the balance, any false step might be disastrous. Power politics at this stage of our national life is sure to spell our ruin. Moreover, as I have said before, there is much uphill constructive work yet to be done, which can most effectively be done if we believe ourselves to be and act as humble servants of the toiling and striving millions of India. Let every position of trust, power and responsibility be for the sake of service and not a matter of pelf, patronage, pride or self-aggrandisement. And when we are in high positions, let us not think in terms of creed, caste or family, but in terms of work and ability. As public servants we have neither friends nor opponents. Provided there is merit and loyal service to the country, and devotion to duty, old prejudices and enmities should not count. Above all, in every public position we must be most scrupulously honest and above board.

#### CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

We shall soon be meeting in the Constituent Assembly to frame a constitution of free India. It will be a democratic constitution and will be federal in

character. We may not, however, forget that, in the administrative as in the economic field, centralisation, more than is absolutely necessary, is inimical to liberty. It is good, therefore, that the provinces in free India shall have the maximum autonomy consistent with external and internal security. But some of our provinces are each as big as a country in Europe. There may be over-centralisation in the administration of the provinces, which too we must avoid. Long ago, how long history does not record, the Indian genius worked out the institution of the village and local panchayat. It remained our fort through many a turbulent period. Kings and dynasties fought and failed, empires rose, ruled, misruled and disappeared, but the villager's life maintained its even tenor, away from the din of battle and the rush of rising and falling empires. He had a village-state which protected his life and property and made civilized life possible. Progressively, we must delegate to the village panchayats judicial powers in petty criminal and civil cases; the local police too might be put under the charge of the panchayat. If we build upon this village unit of self-government, rehabilitate it to the altered conditions of today, we shall be working in consonance with the genius of our people. This is the natural and the easy way. Merely to copy the West should not be our object. We may also not forget that the West has made, more specially in the big countries, democracy complex and expensive. West has evolved the official red-tape which makes the democratic machinery cumbersome and slow-moving. All these drawbacks we must try to avoid in the new constitution that we may devise.

Our judicial system must be simple and effective. The law's delay and expense and complicity must be avoided. Also there must be ample provision made for the enjoyment of civil liberties. They must be protected even from the arbitrary action of a democratic and representative government. We may not forget that power corrupts even the patriot in office. Ample provision, consistent with the larger interests of the country and the masses, must be made for the

protection of minorities. Their language and culture must have free scope for development. There must be absolute tolerance in matters of faith and religion. Every individual and every group must be free to propagate his and its ideas, consistently with the maintenance of peace and public morality.

#### INDIA AND THE WORLD

The Congress has for many years taken keen interest in international happenings. These affect us and today no country can, for long, remain indifferent to what is happening elsewhere in the world. With our national struggle based on non-violence, we have naturally always stood for international disarmament, peace, co-operation and open diplomacy. Through our sufferings we know what aggression means to a subject people. The hard cruel strokes of foreign domination have taught us to value international peace and goodwill. These lessons, learnt in adversity, we hope, we shall not forget in happier and more prosperous times, when we have achieved full freedom.

We believe in a new world order based upon goodwill and co-operation. We believe that these objects can be achieved by an international organisation consisting of free and equal nations. We believe that so long as imperialism exists, whatever international organisation is devised for peace, will inevitably be turned into an instrument of ambition by powerful and unscrupulous nations. It will not be based upon equality, justice and fair play, but upon the combined might of a few dominant nations. There will always be the Big Three, Four or Five. That way lies danger. International thieves and robbers, even as ordinary thieves and robbers, sooner or later, and sooner than later, fall out among themselves, and when they do they shake the very foundations of the earth, as they have done twice within the last thirty years. As long as there are dependent nations and peoples, so long will there be conflict and war.

Further, we believe that the smooth and successful working of an international organisation, even as of democracy, is not merely a question of external and institutional arrangements. Law and constitution, international courts and armies, are good as far as they go, but just as human passions have to be subdued by an inner self-discipline and then helped by external devices, so must the passions and ambitions of nations be first regulated by a reform of the heart, before any external device can succeed. Humanity must learn to honour only such leaders and politicians who would lead people to peaceful and fruitful rivalry rather than those who would rouse their passions and ambitions by placing before them rosy pictures of power, wealth, empire and domination. When this is done and nations have cultivated the will to be honest, just and fair in their dealings with each other, external devices of constitution and law will not be difficult to devise and work. India stands for a society of nations, where every country, big or small, important or unimportant, free or under international guardianship, has as in a democracy, one vote each. As in internal politics we are against the dictatorship of the one or the few, so are we against the international dictatorship of one powerful nation or a number of them in combination. It is difficult to maintain democratic institutions in a world of nations with unequal international status.

Even while the war was going on, the fundamental freedoms for which it was advertised to be fought, were repudiated in practice by the Allies. The stress of war was invoked as an argument to justify every violation of moral principles. But even after the war fundamental freedoms are as still-born as ever. The Peace Conference is anything but peaceful and the U. N. O. anything but united. The nerves of all nations are on edge and already their minds are haunted by the fear of a third world war. What the big nations of the world are thinking is not how to remove the causes of war, but how to make bigger and better atom bombs. It should have been clear from the start that

atomic energy could not be used for peaceful purposes without its being available for purposes of destruction. Today the experts have given their considered opinion on the same lines. If the use of this energy is not somehow banned, then with national rivalries, ambitions, ideas of revenge and retaliation being what they are, there is danger not only to world peace, but to the very existence of the human race on this planet.

The treatment meted out to the defeated nations leaves a trail of bad karma of fear, resentment and revenge. In the case of an anti-social individual, punishment, revenge and retribution are not the best or the most civilized methods of cure. What is true of the individual is true of the nation. If it is unjust and inhuman in the case of an individual to visit the sins of the father on the son, much more so is it in the case of groups to visit the sins of one generation on another. The defeated nations should not be parcelled up, or made to serve as pawns in the game of international power politics. Every effort should be made to put them on their legs, and every opportunity afforded them to live a normal, healthy, political and economic life.

A free India will have in the field of international affiliations, connections more natural and more suited to her geographical position than she has had under foreign domination. As a matter of fact up to now we have had no free connections at all. We were bound to the wheel of British international affiliations. Whoever was a friend of imperial Britain was India's friend; whoever was Britain's enemy became automatically India's enemy. For the sake of British alliances and enmities, India was twice dragged into war at the cost of untold suffering and loss of life. Free India must cast off this heavy burden. We must have a foreign policy of our own.

We have no past commitments and no imperialist ambitions for the future. We are concerned with achieving and maintaining the freedom of our country so that our nationals at home and abroad may have their rightful opportunity to full and free development,

according to their resources and their genius. We have no enemies. We would like to forget even the wrongs that Great Britain has done to us, once she has made amends and withdrawn her yoke from our necks. We would have no quarrel with South Africa if in the insolence of racial pride its white minority did not seek to deprive the Indians domiciled there of their elementary rights of citizenship, after having enticed them from home.

We respect the right of every people to choose the form of government that suits them best without depriving others of the same right. We watch with equal interest the Russian adventure in Communism, the British experiment in democratic socialism, and the American faith in private enterprise. We wish to imitate none of these forms, though we may have a great deal to learn from each. We would like to maintain a friendly intercourse with all these great peoples on a basis of equality and mutual respect for each other's rights. We must be on our guard against being misled by the propaganda that is being carried on in a section of the world press against Russia, and in another section against the democracies. We must not be duped by ideological claptrap into taking sides in international rivalries and thus embroil ourselves in a third world war, in the mistaken belief that we are serving the world. We should have enough scope at home for our reforming zeal without attempting to reform other nations.

Though we must develop and maintain equally friendly relations with all nations, our associations with our neighbours in Asia and Australia will naturally be closer. With China and Japan we have long historic and cultural associations. Even today, thanks to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who in the fitness of things is our foreign minister, we have cordial relations with China. But we are so much separated from our next-door neighbour that no cable can come from China direct here. It has to come via London and takes often more than 24 hours. All this must be changed. As soon as



democratic Japan, free from its imperial nightmare, comes into existence, India must cultivate its friendship. We may not be obsessed with other people's prejudices, be they of the East or the West. We have also cultural bonds with Indonesia and the eastern islands, which we must develop. Our trade can most profitably flow in these lands to mutual advantage. India and Australia have nothing to lose and much to gain by closer intercourse. Central Asia and the Middle East are other lands with which we have cultural contacts. A fourth of our population professes in common with the inhabitants of these lands the faith of the Prophet. We must renew these contacts and forge new links of friendship. With Soviet Russia too our relations must be closer. With all that we must keep up the connections we already have with the western democracies.

In the past our organisation, whenever occasion arose, freely expressed its views upon current international affairs. Now that our representatives are in the seats of power, we will have to observe greater restraint. We must realise that free governments have innumerable channels through which they get information concerning the trends of thought and action in other lands. They have their regular diplomatic services and their intelligence agents in other lands. They have scholars studying in foreign universities. They have their merchants and industrial and trade agents. They spend millions of pounds to maintain these sources of information. Apart from international press agencies, they have thus many channels through which information about other countries flows to them. Even then, often the information they collect from all these open and secret, official and non-official agencies proves to be misleading, if not wrong. We must realise that today most of these sources of information are closed to us. We have yet to establish this network of international agencies. At present most of the information on international affairs that we get is from one or two tainted press agencies. All this makes it



desirable that we must be guarded in our opinions about other countries. We have to realise that today, more than ever, any irresponsible expression of opinion on our part may involve responsibilities we are not yet ready to shoulder. We must, therefore, observe in this matter reserve and restraint. Our aim remains the same, which is to contribute our best as a free nation towards democracy, the emancipation of the oppressed, international peace and co-operation. We shall fulfil these aims better by trying to realise them in our own institutions and ways of life than by sitting in judgment on other peoples.

There is an aspect of our international relation about which it is necessary, in the interest of peace, that we should make our stand clear. And that is, that though we make no fetish of national sovereignty and are willing to subordinate its rights to the claims of world peace and co-operation on the basis of perfect equality between all peoples, we will not tolerate interference with the right of our people to choose their form of government or violation of the territorial integrity of India. Whether it is the presence of British troops in India against the wishes of our chosen representatives, or foreign-paid propaganda to create dissensions in our ranks, or the continued occupation of portions of our soil by the Portuguese and the French on whatever pretensions, it is a violation of those fundamental freedoms of which no nation can be deprived. If the British can quit India, as they have unequivocally promised to do, it is ridiculous for the Portuguese authorities to claim that Goa is part of their country thousands of miles away. I congratulate Dr. Rammanohar Lohia for having exposed the gross injustice and indignity to which our compatriots are subjected in Goa. I assure our people there that they have our full sympathy in their fight to vindicate their just rights and that free India will never tolerate their subjection to alien tyranny. I appeal to the Portuguese authorities not to complicate an already complicated international situation by claiming what is not legiti-

mately theirs and to build an enduring foundation of friendship between our two nations by undoing the wrong that has been done. The days of empires are over, and today, when even big and powerful nations are being obliged to give up their empires, it is time that the small nations, in their own interest, should gracefully withdraw from theirs and thus help to remove the main cause of wars between nations.

#### SOUTH AFRICA

The question of the status of our countrymen in South Africa has suddenly become one of world importance, having been ably represented by the Indian delegation before the U. N. O. Field Marshal Smuts vainly put forth his objection that the question being purely domestic was not one to be entertained by the U. N. O. The argument, I am glad, was brushed aside by the assemblage. It is apposite to recall that this prolonged fight has been possible only or mainly because our countrymen made for the first time in history the successful use of the marvellous weapon of Satyagraha in that land of gold and diamond. The end of this question we have not seen and may not for some time to come. Sufficient it is for our purpose to note that our countrymen there are holding forth the non-violent battle in which men and women belonging to all parts and communities of India have joined hands. The battle is not one of bread and butter but of national self-respect and honour which is more than bread and butter. On your behalf I wish to tell our countrymen there that in their noble struggle the whole of India is at their back. In passing I note here that the attention of the coloured and exploited races of the earth is rivetted on this struggle alike for the issue as for the means employed to bring it about.

Closely akin to the South African struggle is the one now being carried on in Kenya and Tanganyika. Here the position of the white man is much more untenable than in South Africa. But for want of space in this bird's eyeview of a variety of questions, which

must engage us on the threshold of independence, I would love to take you through the romance of our pre-European and peaceful penetration in Africa through its East coast. I must however content myself with commending to your attention the papers made available to us by the East Africa Indian Deputation that recently visited India. In your name I pledge India's support to our countrymen in East Africa as in the South and wish them every success which is theirs by right.

### CEYLON AND BURMA

Both Ceylon and Burma are our next door neighbours. Only a strip of water separates Ceylon from India. Like Burma it took Buddhism from India. Geographically, culturally and traditionally, it is united with India which it can aptly claim as its mother country. The northern part of Ceylon—Jaffna—is hardly distinguishable from the mainland. For some time past there has been an unfortunate movement to oust the Indian labour population from Ceylon on the ground that they cannot claim citizenship rights there and at the same time regard themselves as Indian nationals. As in South Africa, Indian labour was, in the first instance, induced to go to Ceylon to serve the latter's economy. Ceylon and India have been good neighbours all along and the Congress is determined to maintain and develop these relations. In March 1946, the Congress Working Committee deputed Shri Arvanavakam and Shri G. Ramchandran to meet the Ceylon ministers and discuss with them the vexed question of Indian labour. They succeeded in clearing some ground. It was proposed to send Pandit Nehru and Shri C. Rajagopalachari to further carry on the negotiations. But owing to pressing engagements they could not proceed there. It is unthinkable that a peaceful solution of the question cannot be found. Ceylon and India have a common destiny. Cut off from India, Ceylon stands in danger of being swallowed up in the global strategy of big imperialist powers.

Ethnically and historically Burma is not a part of India. But a common subjection and a common struggle for freedom from foreign imperialism have forged a spiritual link between the two. The experience of the last war has shown how vital the two are to each other for their existence as free countries. Indian nationals have played an important part in the development of the Burmese economy. They have amassed fortunes there. It is up to them to reassure the Burmese that they have no designs to benefit themselves at their expense and that their activities are not inimical to the Burmese interests. Exploited ourselves, we must not lay ourselves open to the charge of exploiting others. Indian nationals in Burma must identify themselves with the people of Burma and mix with them as sugar does with milk. Knit together in a common friendly relationship, India, Burma and Ceylon will be in a position to fulfil their historical mission in the creation of a federation of free Asiatic nations that would constitute a powerful bulwark against imperialism and exploitation, whether of the Western or the Eastern type.

#### OUR ORGANISATION

Let us clearly understand what the Congress is. We hear today about Congress Governments. This is a misleading term. The so-called Congress governments are popular democratic governments. What Congress has done is to organise the country for the formation and smooth functioning of these governments. Today the Congress has organised the people of India for shouldering state responsibility. For many years our people were organised and led by the Congress in their struggle against the arbitrary rule of the British Government in India. It may be that again the Congress, instead of organising the democratic state, may go into the wilderness and resume the struggle for freedom. Let us hope it will not be necessary to do so. But the point that I would like to impress upon you is, that the Congress is merely the agency for the organisation of the people of India for effective national service. This

service may take various forms according to changing circumstances.

The Congress, thus, is a democratic organisation seeking to represent and act on behalf of the people of India. It has done this through service, sacrifice and suffering. It could not be otherwise, for it had to dislodge from its position of power a foreign imperialism that had crushed and emasculated the country. We must clearly understand that the Congress is not the Government. It is a volunteer organisation. That is its strength as well as its weakness. A volunteer organisation is not buttressed by the physical might of the state. It does not rely for its discipline or for the carrying out of its orders upon the magistrate, the constable and the soldier. It functions only through the willing loyalty of its members. Its authority is moral and not physical or coercive. The utmost that the Congress can do is to expel a member from its organisation.

The first condition, therefore, of the existence and effective functioning of such an organisation is unity. This unity is not superimposed by a dictator or a bureaucrat. It can be only achieved if its members learn consciously and deliberately to subordinate personal and party considerations to the larger interests of the whole. They must realize that the larger embraces the smaller. This realization is the more necessary in India whose bane through the centuries has been parochial loyalties of caste, creed, class and the narrow geographical unit. This does not mean that there should be no difference of opinion or no groups or parties in the Congress. It only means that the different groups and parties should realize that in an organic unit one cannot be true to a part unless one is true to the whole. We may in this respect take a lesson from England. An Englishman's loyalty to his country transcends all family, local and party loyalties.

This can be done if we try to emphasise what unites us rather than what divides us from one another. It should not be difficult because in reality the points of

agreement between groups in the Congress are more numerous and more important than the points of difference. Let us not elevate small disagreements to the seemingly heroic heights of principles. We must also cultivate personal contacts, for men and women are often better than their ideas and ideologies, and this can only be discovered by social contacts. Above all let no group act as a liquor shop in a respectable neighbourhood, drawing to itself the wayward, the disappointed and the disgruntled of the family.

The second condition of healthy and effective functioning of the Congress is discipline. This must be self-imposed. We must build up such traditions and conventions as would make indiscipline difficult, if not impossible. Anybody indulging in conduct that is likely to harm the organisation or the country must lose caste in the Congress. There must be things that simply cannot be done by Congressmen because they are not done. Nor must there be scramble for power or a desire to capture the organisation. Power must flow from service and must be used for greater service. The Congress organisation is not a government. We can get out of it only as much as we put in it by the service of our people. In their affection we must realise, as Gandhiji does, our highest reward and fulfilment.

In our struggle against foreign imperialism we have learnt and employed certain methods of agitation and struggle for the attainment of our goal of independence. Because these methods have paid us in the past, we are likely to believe that they are of universal application. We imagine that they will serve us also against the democratically established governments which we have now ourselves installed in power. We have put them there to advance the cause of freedom. The methods employed in our agitation against the foreign government may not, therefore, be quite appropriate in the case of our own. The foreign government provided us with no means of influencing, much less regulating, its policies. If we made any constructive sug-

gestions; they were not heeded. There was no democratic device by which we could displace the executive. The British, in spite of their admiration for Churchill and appreciation of his war services, could throw him out, because for problems of peace they wanted a more suitable leadership. But here in India we had not the power to change a village constable, if he chose to make a public nuisance of himself. The only remedy under such circumstances was agitation and criticism, which were largely necessarily negative. No constructive suggestions were tolerated or accepted. We had also resorted to direct action for the achievement of our independence. Today, when we can change our legislators and ministers, direct action should be out of the question. Even in our criticism we must be careful and considerate. Our ministers in the provinces and at the Centre are harassed by so many political and administrative problems that they need our understanding and sympathy. The nation wants too many things done quickly. We have desired freedom so keenly and so long that we have come to believe that its advent will solve all our problems. We are therefore apt to be impatient and to overlook the difficulties our representatives have to face in a government that has no traditions of service, and whose officials have always acted as the masters of the people. The machinations of the vested interests, official and unofficial, native and foreign, also make the task of a National Government at this initial stage difficult. Our criticism must, therefore, be constructive and sympathetic and never merely destructive. We must give our representatives breathing time to clear the mess that they have inherited.

Against the foreigner we could justifiably claim exclusive patriotism. Such a claim would sound hollow against our tried and trusted leaders who have proved their credentials with at least as much suffering and sacrifice as we ourselves have put in the cause of the country. I know that power corrupts even the patriot and the servant of the people. But the risk of power corrupting can never be avoided. In the complex so-



ciety of today, the executive must have requisite power to discharge its onerous duties. It will not do to repeat parrot-like the 19th century liberal slogan that, "that Government is the best which governs the least." To-day society must be defended against the action of individuals and associations who in subtle legal ways seek to exploit it. The State must protect the rights of the citizen against such individuals and associations. It is, therefore, obliged to take upon itself tasks which no ancient ruler ever conceived it possible. If, therefore, the National Executives have to discharge their duties well and efficiently, they must have the requisite power. Today even in democracies the executives have such wide powers as Charles the First never dared to claim for himself. The only remedy against state power then is eternal vigilance. This is possible by the widest diffusion of knowledge, general and political. In the meantime, let us make our suggestions to the Executives through channels we have already created. Let nothing be done or said which will be used by our enemies to discredit our representatives in the Government.

So much for the would-be critics. But those who are in the Government must also never forget that they are the servants of the people, not their masters. They must remember that they cannot afford to kick the ladder that has taken them to their present eminence. Let them, therefore, always remain loyal to the Congress and through it to the people of India. From them they derive their strength and to them is their first and foremost responsibility. They must also see that they are not swallowed up by the bureaucratic machine. They must reform and simplify it. They must have less of red-tapism and consistently with their public duty they must be accessible to the people. They must also dispense with much of the paraphernalia of pomp and power that a foreign government thought necessary to keep its prestige. Their prestige is derived from service and voluntary poverty which they embraced before office came their way.



It is often complained that the constitution of the Congress has broken down. It no longer works smoothly; the organisation has become too big and complex for it. There is, therefore, a demand for overhauling it. To meet this demand, the A.I.C.C. has appointed a committee to suggest necessary changes. The committee has met often and made its suggestions. These, if they are approved by the Working Committee and the Subjects Committee, will be placed before you for your adoption. If for any reason it is not possible to adopt the changes immediately, the Constitution Committee has suggested some interim changes which will regulate our elections and eliminate from these, as far as possible, corruption, scramble for posts and violence. But we must not forget that external checks cannot be effective, unless we cultivate public virtues. The last war has killed all idealism and made the average citizen cynical. It has introduced black market methods everywhere. These methods are used in Congress elections too. Bribery, fraud, impersonation and sometimes even violence are used to coerce the voter. Ballot boxes are stolen and destroyed. All this is degrading. It is a reflection not only on our public spirit but on our moral principles. It is strange that we should be non-violent in fighting foreign imperialism, but violent in our dealings with each other. This clearly shows that our non-violence is that of the weak and not of the strong. It is better to be strong and violent than to be weak and non-violent.

It is our great good fortune that we of this generation have been afforded an opportunity to be the instruments of a noble cause. It is not merely the freedom of our people from foreign yoke that we are called upon to strive and work for. Such an opportunity has come to many people in history. Ours is a unique opportunity. It is to win our freedom by non-violent and truthful means and to work for high ends by moral means. Ours is the opportunity to bring about a fusion of different castes and creeds and racial and religious types. Ours is the opportunity to unify what appears to be dif-

fering and conflicting cultures. We have to work to build up unity in diversity and produce a mosaic of many colours. We have to combine various and often dissonant sounds and notes to produce a symphony that was never before heard on land or sea. We may not forget that today humanity must find a peaceful solution to its conflicts, social, economic, political, racial and cultural, or perish. There can be no violent solution. Violence has over-reached itself. It threatens to destroy the patient with the disease. Some other method must be found. India has found the method and tried it to some purpose, under a leadership that comes once in many centuries. It is a new method. There have been lapses. But remember, no revolution in history was less costly in the loss of life, property and the dislocation of normal life, and created less hatred and strife than the Indian revolution, which, if we are not negligent, is on the verge of success. But whether immediate success crowns our efforts or not, let us not forget that we are engaged in a good and great cause. In such a cause there can be no ultimate failure. But if the cause is to succeed, the agents working for it must themselves be good and great. Slavery works neither for goodness nor for greatness. But the darkness of centuries can be removed the moment the light is brought in. In India the light has been lit. Let us keep it steadily burning and let us follow its lead, and all shall yet be well with us—*Bande Mataram*.

## BRAVERY AND FEARLESSNESS

*(Press report of the concluding address, delivered extempore, at the Meerut session of the Congress).*

Friends,

I thank you for the co-operation you have given me in disposing of the business before the house. I have no doubt you realized that we are living in critical times when a false step may take away what we are about to achieve and make our goal distant. We are living in the midst of civil strife, and that of a nature that humiliates us and makes us a laughing-stock before the world. Let me repeat what I told you of in my presidential address, that we in India—whether Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians or followers of any other denomination—cannot possibly leave this country. No other country can be our house. We have to live here and live together. Let us then live in peace and brotherhood. If we do not so live, Nature will make us suffer, and after great sufferings we will have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that no human agency can separate those whom God has united. Therefore, a Hindu who offends a Muslim is an enemy of his community and of his country and a Muslim who offends a Hindu destroys his religion and the freedom of his country. We have got to live like brothers and so must we live.

Another thing I should like to mention is this. During the course of our discussions here, the name of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was often mentioned by some friends and we were taken to task for not having included it in our condolence resolution. We were accused of want of respect for him because we have not lost hope of his yet being among the living. It pains me that Netaji's name should be invoked to serve the narrow ends of party politics. Let no one make an all-India

leader a provincial or party leader. Let me tell you, Subhash Bose does not belong to Bengal; he does not belong to the Forward Bloc; he does not belong to the I.N.A. He does not belong to the radicals of any group. He belongs to India (cheers) for whom he worked and for whom I hope he is still living (renewed cheers). When I was in Bombay I was asked to speak about the I.N.A. I said that but for my faith in non-violence I would have acted exactly as Subhas Babu did (cheers), and felt proud of it. I would have thought that I had done the greatest service to my country. I would have thought that I had done what many great patriots had done in history. Going away from the prison-house, that India is, to organise an Independence movement outside India is the greatest patriotic service that a man can do (loud cheers) provided he believes in armed resistance. I do not believe in violence, but I do not want to impose my standards of conduct upon others. I judge other people by the standards they have kept before themselves provided such standards are recognised by humanity as high standards. That evil should be resisted by war and violence is recognised even by the priests of great religions today. How then can I in the pride of this new religion of Mahatma Gandhi, which has converted me to non-violence, condemn a brother of mine who has done the greatest service to the country? Holding these views I cannot think that Subhas Bose belongs to the Forward Bloc or to the I.N.A. He belongs to us all. Let me remind you that once before when he was reported dead, Mahatma Gandhi, the man of non-violence, was the first to send a telegram of condolence to his mother and the Working Committee had joined in it. This had irritated Sir Stafford Cripps who was then negotiating with us about independence. It had annoyed the British Government. But we did not care. Great men and great prophets whose appeal was universal were made sectional by their followers in the past and I would entreat you, not to repeat the same mistake in the case of Netaji.

A word to those who style themselves as radicals. I do not know the meaning of this word, in Congress politics. It is always bad to be entangled in words. If it is meant that radicals are those who are lukewarm in their advocacy of non-violence then I must say that this is a wrong interpretation of the word. A believer in non-violence may be as revolutionary as a believer in violence. We must go beyond words. I have learnt non-violence from Gandhiji. Once I believed in violence and today I need not hesitate to tell you that I belonged to the group of revolutionaries of 1906-1907. But I never felt so fearless, so bold, so strong, as when I accepted the creed of non-violence from Gandhiji—(cheers). Even in the days of my revolutionary life, I hope I was a brave man and I would not have hesitated to mount the gallows; but I tell you that in those days wherever I went, whether it was in the train, or on the road, my eyes were directed behind me to see if a police or a C.I.D. man was not following me! When I talked to a friend, I would calculate whether he was really a friend or an enemy. I suspected and therefore feared everybody. But from the time I accepted non-violence I did not care who was coming behind me, who was going before me (cheers). When I accepted non-violence I did not care whether he with whom I talked was a friend or an enemy, whether he belonged to the police or the C.I.D. I tell you, if I was brave then, I have become fearless now. It is this that made me go to Noakhali, not caring about what had happened there or what may happen to me or my wife. When I was in the revolutionary movement I was afraid of even myself, lest in an unguarded moment I give away a secret or a friend. When I am non-violent the police may torture me but what will they get out of me? There is nothing that I have to conceal. If I tell the truth I can betray nobody. Even this fear of myself is gone because of non-violence. This fearlessness can come only through non-violence. Violence may be brave but that kind of bravery always falls short of the fearlessness of non-violence. Non-violence never suspects anybody. Non-

violence never looks behind. For non-violence there is no police. For non-violence there is no C.I.D. For non-violence there is no enemy in the world. A non-violent soldier stands straight and erect and death has no terror for him. Death may have no terror for the violent soldier also but the violent soldier's bravery is always tinged with some fear.

Here (in this house) people have repeatedly talked of violence and have been applauded for it. Let me tell you that if this country is to rise and prosper it shall do so only through non-violence. There is no other way for us. We are divided into so many groups—geographical, political, economic, social and religious—that if we use violence against the foreign enemy, we are sure to use the very same violence against each other. They who live by the sword shall perish by the sword (cheers). You see the happening in the world around us. Today we have introduced the atom bomb to settle imaginary disputes but something worse will come unless humanity takes stock of what it has been doing till today. I do not condemn people because they use violence in a good cause. Non-violence is something new but I want to place it before you because I have tried both violence and non-violence and I can inform you from personal experience that I have found non-violence a superior weapon for the redress of wrongs. The world too will one day find it a superior weapon.

Many of my radical friends do not belong to the age of Gandhi. I belong to that age. In 1920, when Gandhiji introduced Satyagraha in Indian politics, I was a young man. I saw how life was infused in the masses through non-violence: how they became bold and fearless; how those who before crawled on their bellies, bravely bore lathi charges and even bullets. Today, because there are communal riots and the horizon appears a little dark, we get confused and in that confusion the best of us seem to lose their faith in non-violence. We think that nothing can be accomplished through non-violence; but I feel that the light has been lighted and it shall guide us whether we like it or not. It may not

be today or tomorrow. Prophets live and they die but their doctrines often fructify after centuries. How many followers had Buddha when he died? How many had Mohamed? When Christ died, he had twelve disciples and all the twelve repudiated him as we are today repudiating Gandhiji. Yet Christianity lives; Christ lives; his scripture is the scripture of the world. He has conquered the world even as Buddha conquered the world. Do not look to us. We may betray the master not thrice but thirty times thrice and yet the master and his doctrine will live. The doctrine is based upon eternal truth. Without non-violence, life would be impossible. If we are going to solve our problems by falsehood and crooked diplomacy, I say our problems will not be solved. The world's problems will not be solved.

Let me now tell you in one word the difference between Socialism and Gandhism. It is that Gandhiji holds that one's means should be as pure as one's ends are high; that high ends cannot be served by low and crooked means; that high ends are contaminated by the low means used. This is in a nutshell the difference between Western Socialism and the Eastern Socialism of Gandhiji. The world will not be safe from war, from strife, from bloodshed, until this doctrine is accepted, whether it is accepted today, or after a century. If it is after a century then that century will be a difficult and troublesome century for humanity. It will not be a peaceful century. Therefore, I appeal to you, as I have always appealed to my radical friends, try to understand what lies behind Gandhiji's philosophy. I have given something of it in my Presidential address. Gandhiji stands for democracy; he stands for economic and social equality; he stands for international peace. Is there a Socialist who does not want these three things? Why do the Indian Socialists want to make their philosophy rigid by bringing in the question of complete social control which, in practice, must be state control? I am sure, economic independence of some sort is of the essence of individuality. If you take away a man's economic inde-



pendence you have taken away a good deal of his personality and there can be no democracy without individuality.

I hope and pray that you will go out from this hall determined to do the right thing, right as you conceive it. You may accept my views or you may reject them. That is immaterial. But I want you to think. I cannot expect to do in twenty minutes what Gandhiji has not been able to do in twenty-six years. But I have poured out my heart before you because you have entrusted me with the heavy and the responsible task of guiding your counsels—*Bande Mataram*.



## RACIAL ARROGANCE

*(Press Statement issued on 24th Dec. 1946).*

I have seen Field Marshall Smuts' statement made in Pretoria on December 20th, as reported in the *Sunday Statesman* of December 22nd. It is the statement of a man who, smarting under defeat, has thrown off the mask and blurted out the truth. All these years the aged Marshall has posed as the champion of democracy and the rights of man. When the British empire was under the shadow of Hitler's threat, he became an eloquent advocate of the Four Freedoms and thundered against the Nazi theory of racial superiority. In fact, Hitler's claim to rule over a portion of Europe was a modest one compared with the claim of a handful of white intruders perpetually to exploit the coloured millions of Africa. The whole stress of the Marshall's grouse is against the idea of human equality which, according to him, was unfortunately dominant at the United Nations' Organisation. This is what he says: "The idea of human equality was dominant at the United Nations. We have been brought up differently—not only we in South Africa, but the whole world. If this idea were applied to South Africa, we see at once the difficulties in which we would be placed—2,000,000 whites surrounded by 150,000,000 coloured people. If there is to be equality in all respects, where do we come in? Had we not better pack up and go? It is a concept which does not fit in with facts in South Africa. The fact is that equality does not prevail anywhere in the world."

It is indeed true that "equality does not prevail anywhere in the world," and everywhere the reformer has to advocate it and work for it. However, instead of deploring the fact of inequality, this champion of the Atlantic Charter quotes it as an argument against the

ideal itself. His statement is a pathetic confession of his dread of equality. It is not the fate of the 150,000,000 coloured people that concerns him, but of the small and privileged white minority. What will happen to it if the submerged masses of Africa rise up and claim their legitimate place in the land of their fathers? What happens to those who grab more than is legitimately theirs? History has repeated the answer often enough. The problem is not confined to Africa but is spread over the whole of Asia. If the whites cannot reconcile themselves to the idea of equality with the coloured races of the world, they have no place in Asia and Africa. Racial imperialism is even more odious than economic imperialism. So long as either of them prevails and so long as there are Smuts and Churchills to turn the Four Freedoms into a mockery, there can be no peace in this world.

## VIET-NAM

*(Press Statement issued on the 4th January, 1947)*

News from Viet-Nam is disquieting. One would have thought that the recent victory in the French elections of the revolutionary parties would mean a radical change in the French foreign policy as well. But imperialism, as we have found to our cost, dies hard and seems to be equally compatible with every kind of ism, whether it is capitalism, socialism or communism. We have the friendliest feelings for the French people and our sympathies were with them when they were themselves the helpless victims of Nazi aggression. But in this struggle of the national movement in Viet-Nam against French imperialism, our sympathies are naturally with the former. No nation, however progressive or revolutionary its creed at home, can be trusted to look after the welfare of another people at the point of the pistol. Until every nation, small or big, is equally free, there can be no hope for peace or ordered progress. If the legitimate urge of the peoples of Asia for freedom is suppressed by force of superior arms, then sooner or later the world will be caught in a conflagration worse than the last world war. The responsibility for it will rest on the use the big nations make of the power that is theirs today. It is a pity that the French who value their own freedom so highly should try to deprive other people of theirs and repudiate all that they professed when they were down and low. France may not forget that the liberty she enjoys today is not the result of her exertions alone but of the progressive world forces against Hitler. Today though Hitler is dead yet he seems to have infected the triumphant nations with his own spirit.

## POLICE RESPONSIBILITY

*(Press Statement dated 23rd Jan. 1947)*

I am pained and shocked at the recent police firing in Calcutta on student demonstrators on the Viet-Nam day. I know that the restrictions on public meetings and demonstrations imposed by the Provincial Governments have been necessitated by the communal situation. All parties are interested that as long as the communal situation remains disturbed these restrictions might remain. If they are necessary it becomes the duty of every citizen to respect them. In this connection it is significant that the Working Committee decided that on such an important occasion, as the observance of the Independence Day, there should be no big meetings or demonstrations. What applied to the Independence Day should also apply to other demonstrations. The organisers of the student demonstrations on the Viet-Nam day were not therefore well advised to organise demonstrations without the permission of the authorities. This fact, however, does not make it any the less wrong and cruel on the part of the police to fire on peaceful student demonstrators. After all there was nothing communal about the demonstrations. Nor had they anything to do with internal politics. They were meant to show Indian solidarity with the cause of an Asiatic people struggling against European imperialism. All parties in India are united upon this international issue. Even if the students were guilty of a breach of the law, the breach was merely technical. The demonstration was admittedly peaceful. The students' objective was to march to the University grounds and protest against the conduct of the French and express their sympathy with the cause of Viet-Nam independence. There was therefore no legal, much less moral, justification for the police firing. The Bengal Government,

whatever its composition, is not a foreign government, interested in crushing the enthusiasm and exuberance of youth. The students, however wayward, are an asset of the nation. A wise government will handle their susceptibilities with sympathy and understanding and not leave it to the police to ride rough shod over them and to shoot down students as if they were criminals. I hope the Bengal Government will inquire into this outrage and take adequate steps to prevent the recurrence of such police highhandedness and make due amends to the innocent victims of this tragedy.

I would take this opportunity to impress upon Congressmen and Congress Organisations to guard themselves against the temptation to violate restrictions that are necessitated by the disturbed communal situation.

## PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

*(Press Statement dated the 25th Jan. 1947)*

Two days back I had occasion to issue a statement on the recent police firing on student demonstrators in Calcutta on the Viet-Nam Day. In that statement, while condemning the police firing, I had deplored the decision of the students to stage demonstrations in defiance of a ban imposed by the Government in order to prevent a recurrence of communal disturbances. Since then I find that similar demonstrations and consequent police firing have been repeated elsewhere. As a believer in non-violence I am against all violence, specially of the kind that results in the loss of human life. Therefore this news of police firing in several places has pained me grievously. I wish to warn with all the emphasis I can command, Congressmen, Congress organisations and the students who have always been loyal to the Congress, that by organising such demonstrations they do no service to the cause or the causes they hold dear, but merely play into the hands of mischievous anti-social elements whose interest it is to create disorder and to fan communal passions. The Working Committee has directed Congressmen to forego demonstrations and public speeches even on such an important occasion as the Independence Day. This decision should apply with greater force to demonstrations on other occasions. In many places the Provincial Governments have imposed bans on demonstrations in the interest of communal peace. It should be our duty to co-operate with such measures as are necessitated by public interest. There is no virtue in defying the law for the sake of appearing heroic. Even where a law or ban is arbitrary and injurious to public good, no useful purpose is served by sporadic and disorderly defiance of it. Civil disobedience has no meaning if it is not well organised, dis-

ciplined and non-violent. The Congress has never encouraged sporadic action. Friends may rest assured that whenever a legitimate occasion for starting Satyagraha arises, as in the past so now, the Congress will give the word of command. I would therefore urge upon the public, more particularly upon Congressmen, to participate only in such demonstrations of a political nature as are organised by, or are held under, the auspices of the authoritative Congress organisations in their provinces. In no case should any prohibitive orders be violated without the permission of the Working Committee. I would also suggest to the Provincial Governments to institute an impartial enquiry into the incidents that have recently taken place.



## AN INSTRUMENT OF FREEDOM

*(Inaugural speech at the Conference of P.C.C. Presidents and Secretaries—Allahabad, 20th Feb. 1947)*

"Friends, I welcome you all here. We have met to devise ways and means to strengthen the Congress Organisation. We are all conscious that our organisation is not what it should be, that its many weaknesses and defects are increasingly proving a bar to its effective functioning as an instrument of Swaraj for the people. We know what the weaknesses are, but the trouble is that each one of us thinks that the fault lies not in him but in others. Each group in the Congress accuses the other of being the villain of the piece. The Socialists are convinced that the orthodox Congressmen are the source of all trouble; the orthodox Congressmen return the compliment. The Ministries in Congress Provinces complain that they are not getting adequate co-operation from the Congressmen; the latter charge the Ministries with going their own way, irrespective of the Congress policy. And so what we have is a medley of charges and counter-charges but no real heart-searching on the part of any one. Not unless we learn to see our own faults and cure ourselves of the evil before charging others with it, can we maintain the integrity of our organisation. This is our first duty as Congressmen.

The Congress was originally a platform for constitutional agitation. It was Mahatma Gandhi who turned it into a revolutionary organisation. He was able to achieve this transformation without destroying the unity and continuity of the Congress because of his non-violence. The constitutionalists remained in the Congress but they were obliged to keep pace with the

revolutionary struggle. Each struggle that we have waged, despite its seeming failure, has brought a fresh access of power to the masses, of which the constitutionalists have reaped the harvest. This creates misunderstanding between the two wings of the Congress. There would be no room for this misunderstanding if we understood the integrated nature of Gandhiji's philosophy. He does not break life's activity into water-tight compartments of politics, social reforms, religion, etc. Because of his integrated personality he is able to turn the most destructive energy into constructive channels. Our mistake is that we miss the whole for the part and create differences where there need be none. We have been law-breakers so long that we are unable to harness ourselves to the constructive role of our revolutionary programme. We unite at the time of struggle and fall apart as soon as the struggle is over. Some people talk heroically of the unity at the barricades but what particular heroism is there in a unity which even the poorest army is compelled to achieve in the field in sheer self-protection? The truly heroic unity is that which we are able to achieve, not at the barricades, but in the field of our day to day national activity. If we have learnt to unite in the constructive field, the unity at the barricades will, as in other free countries, automatically follow.

It is not reasonable to expect all Congressmen to think absolutely alike. The existence of different groups in the Congress is therefore not unnatural and not objectionable but it becomes objectionable when these groups develop narrow loyalties which supersede their larger loyalty to the Congress as a whole. Unfortunately, this is what is happening in the Congress. Minor differences among the leaders have dangerous repercussions on the followers which considerably damage the stability and reputation of the Congress Organisation. Even more dangerous than parties are the cliques round particular powerful individuals. They are based on no principles but merely on power politics. As a result of a succession of different types

of absolutism—native and foreign—we have developed a tendency to form cliques within parties and groups. We have imported the evils of our caste system even into our politics. The Congress, which is the symbol and weapon of our unity, has come to be infected with the very evils which it set out to cure. It is for you, who have met here, to consider how best to check these unfortunate fissiparous tendencies which are sapping the strength and morale of our organisation.

Some Congressmen keep on harping on the imminence of the next struggle against the British which, they insist, must be on the model of the 1942 struggle. To assume that the technique of the next struggle must necessarily imitate the last is to fall into the same error as did the Allied Generals in the last war who failed to anticipate the new technique of the Germans. I remember Gandhiji had once told me that the technique of no two struggles of his was the same. That is the attitude of the real revolutionary who is ever ready to adjust his tactics to the changing circumstances. It is therefore unwise of us, Congressmen, to allow ourselves to be obsessed with any particular model of struggle. All that we need do is to strengthen our ranks and keep ourselves ready for any emergency that may arise. Nor need we forget that British Imperialism is on its death bed. It does not matter what the British intentions are. When a man's days are numbered, his intention to die or to live, is of little consequence. But even a man on deathbed is capable of mischief. The British have enough material for mischief in India. That material is supplied by ourselves, by our weakness, our selfishness and our disunity. Whether a fresh struggle against the British is imminent or not, a struggle against the weakness in our own organisation is urgently called for. Without such a struggle Swaraj for the masses will still remain a dream, even if the British quit India and our own men rule in the Secretariat in Delhi. It is in this struggle that I invite the co-operation of every Congressman."

*(Concluding address of Acharya J. B. Kripalani at the conference of Presidents and Secretaries of the Provincial Congress Committees.—Allahabad, February 1947).*

Friends,

What shall I tell you? I can only wish you God-speed. You have completed the discussion for which you assembled here. Your long record of national service assures me that you will succeed in accomplishing the task which you have set before yourselves. Among you are those who in 1920 gave up their studies or their careers, courted imprisonment and suffered lathi blows. I hope the ideals of simplicity and sacrifice which inspired us then will continue to sustain us. At that time we did not even dream of material rewards for our sacrifices. But today as the prospect of such rewards has gained actuality we are exposed to dangerous temptation. Not all of us have been able to resist them. We are becoming soft and ease-loving. We hunt for offices and ministerial appointments and are jealous of those who secure them. When in office we not unoften ape the ways of our British predecessors whom we were so fond of condemning. Our organisation has been built on voluntary sacrifice and self-restraint and if we give up these ideals so easily and so soon we shall fail to bring real Swaraj to our people.

In fact there can be no real freedom without self-restraint. If freedom meant the right of every one to do as he pleased, then we have more of such freedom in India than is found anywhere else in the world. We can and do commit nuisance wherever we like. Our housewives throw the daily rubbish for their houses on the streets. We are free to keep our children illiterate

and to inflict our neighbours with whatever diseases we breed in our homes. We have more freedom to pollute the Ganges which we worship than the Englishman has to pollute the Thames which he does not pretend to worship. To take another example, our young students, with little experience of life are free to dictate to us, as no English student would have dared to dictate to his leaders. During my recent tour in Bihar young students freely boarded my train without tickets and several times pulled the chain with impunity and detained the train—ostensibly to honour the Congress President. Such freedoms are unheard of in England and other free countries.

True freedom is creative and not self-destructive. It grows with self-restraint. Mahatma Gandhi is not free to do many things that we do. For instance he is not free to smoke, to drink or to frequent the cinema, though he is the freest individual we have. His freedom is the freedom of the dancer who dare not take a false step. His course is strictly prescribed for him by the rules of his act and yet Gandhiji is the most free and the most restrained of men. He taught us revolt as well as self-restraint. The former being easy was well learnt by us. The latter we have not cared to learn. Great tasks and small minds go ill together.

We cannot win Swaraj until we have learnt to subordinate the smaller to the larger interest. Let me cite an example from my recent experience in Bihar. We were late in arriving at a railway junction. I was worried, but the local Congress Secretary assured me that it did not matter as he had kept the train waiting for me. Was it a compliment or an insult to me? The trains in Bihar seldom run to time, but the argument that we Congressmen can detain them at will and that our convenience must override the convenience of hundreds of other passengers betrays the mentality of the bureaucrats of the old regime. If Congressmen begin to behave as if they were the rulers of the people and not their servants, then it is legitimate to say that what we have today are Congress Governments and

not the people's governments. Such rule would be no better than Pathan, Moghul, Rajput, Maratha or Sikh rule which India had before in her history. Delhi has been the seat as well as the grave of empires. If any one thinks that by capturing power in Delhi we can attain Swaraj he is much mistaken. Our Swaraj can only be attained in the villages by the service of the people. It is this service that has brought us to this eminence.

I have talked of the twin danger of succumbing to material temptations and of subordinating the larger national interest to the narrow interest of party, caste or clique. Our third great danger and perhaps the greatest of all dangers, is violence. I have no desire to enter into a controversy on the merits or demerits of violence versus non-violence. All I wish to stress at the moment is that circumstanced as we are today, violence will be disastrous for us. If we resort to violence against the British we shall sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, direct it against one another. We lack the necessary self-discipline and the necessary conventions to limit its use as, for example, the British do. There are no less rivalries and animosities between the different political parties in Great Britain than there are amongst us. Nevertheless no party thinks of resorting to violence to terrorise the other. Not only that. It would not have occurred to Churchill, however ruthless and unscrupulous he might be in his dealings with Germans or with Indians, to use his governmental machinery to tamper with the ballot boxes in England even when he knew that the result of the poll would be his downfall. There are certain conventions, some practical morality, which the British have built up and which is responsible for the successful working of their political institutions. We have no such conventions, no such morality. We are too logical to be wise. We think that if one thing is justifiable, why not another. The Muslim *goonda* in Bengal and the Hindu *goonda* in Bihar argued, "if I can kill a male adult, why not also a woman and a child?"

The result was that we proved ourselves capable of a callousness from which even a Nazi may have shrunk. We have so many divisions and unreasoning animosities in our political and religious life and so little of self-discipline and restraint that if we once take to violence to assert our will we shall never know when or where to stop. In fact so bitter and vile tend to become our mutual jealousies and rivalries that we often forget who are our real enemies. Not only the communalists but even some Congressmen sometimes talk and behave as if their greatest enemies are those whom they regard as their political rivals. So low is our political morality that the episode of Prithviraj and Jaichand has never become obsolete. We find it easier to co-operate with the foreigner than with our own countrymen. If therefore in our present state we take recourse to violence, we are in danger of annihilating ourselves. We shall only succeed in discrediting democracy and pave the way for a dictatorship. In political life, as in the spiritual, self-discipline is the foundation of all other virtues.

Do not think that I am free from the failings against which I have warned you. I am one of you and no better and, let me hope, no worse than most of you. We are all equally prone to failings and equally capable of rising above them if we hold steadfast to the standards which Mahatma Gandhi has kept before us. Having been a professor for many years I have never outgrown the habit of analysing situations when I can.



## NATIONAL WEEK

*(Press Statement dated 1st April, 1947)*

Year after year, for the last many years, we have observed 6th to 13th April as the National Week. On 6th April 1919 was inaugurated the first Civil Disobedience Movement. It launched the bark which is today nearing the harbour of independence, surviving storms on the deep seas. On April 13 of the same fateful year, occurred the ghastly tragedy of Jallianwalabag, where the blood of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs flowed in a common sacrificial stream. The two dates are thus enshrined in the nation's memory, the one as the symbol of its will to freedom, the other as the emblem of its united sacrifice sealed in blood.

Today though the nation's will to freedom is about to be fulfilled, the unity of India is faced with its severest challenge. Even the freedom which seems so near may prove to be illusory, if we are not wise, for the last stage of a voyage requires the most careful piloting. This year's national week has, therefore, a greater significance for us than it had ever before. We have to harness the passion and energy that we have roused in our people to the reconstruction of our national life.

By our non-violent struggle and sacrifices we have obliged the British Government to agree to a peaceful transfer of power into Indian hands. We have now to prepare the nation to receive that power. We cannot do this better or more effectively than by devoting ourselves to the Constructive Programme which Gandhiji and the Congress have kept before us. If we wish to achieve Swaraj or self-rule for the masses, if the power transferred is to be exercised by the people and not merely by a coterie or class, then the only way to ensure it is through the Constructive Programme. It

is a comprehensive programme which touches every aspect of the life of the common people and strikes at the root of the poverty and ignorance in which our masses are steeped. The Conference of Presidents and Secretaries of the Provincial Congress Committees which met recently at Allahabad adopted a scheme for the successful execution of this programme which has been approved by the Working Committee. Congressmen could not observe the National Week more fittingly than by inaugurating the scheme and mobilising the will and resources of the people to its whole-hearted implementation. Funds should be collected and workers enrolled to this end. The General Secretaries have already issued specific instructions to the Provincial Congress Committees which I am sure every Congressman will carry out. The public, too, I hope will co-operate.

Owing to the unfortunate communal tension public meetings and processions have been banned by the authorities in many places. Where such bans exist, Congressmen and the public must respect them. Communal unity is an important item in the Constructive Programme and nothing must be done which is likely to add to the prevailing passions. Moreover it is time that we realised that it is not by political demonstrations but by constructive work, discipline and sacrifice, that we shall lay the foundation of a free and democratic India.

## REPORT OF THE SPEECH DELIVERED IN MUZAFFARPUR DURING THE BIHAR TOUR

*(Meaning of Swaraj Feb. 15, 1947).*

Friends,

I thank you for the warmth of your welcome though I do not understand the significance of some of the slogans raised. One of them is 'Delhi Chalo'. Whatever justification this slogan had in the past it has no meaning now, when our trusted leaders, Jawaharlalji, Sardar Patel and Rajendra Babu are in Delhi and occupy positions which were the monopoly of the English Imperialists or their hired Indian henchmen. This should satisfy us. But evidently it does not. Why? Is it that unconsciously the popular mind feels that Swaraj has not yet been attained in spite of the fact that popular leaders are already in Delhi? Why this doubt? You have yourselves given the reason when in your address you complain of shortage of food, clothing and housing and the prevalence of bribery, corruption and black-marketing. You have blamed the Congress government for all this. But are you sure you have done your bit to help the Government to change the conditions? It is easy to blame others for our sufferings. But before blaming one must carry out a vigorous self-analysis. Take for instance the shortage of cloth. Long ago Gandhiji warned us against this. With statistics he proved even to the intellectuals that it was possible for each individual to be self-sufficient in the matter of cloth. Only an hour's labour daily at the spinning wheel would give an individual sufficient yarn per year to clothe himself or herself. And the plying of the Charkha is possible from infancy to old age. Gandhiji, busy as he is, can find this hour every day, but not we who waste many hours in useless and even harmful activities apart from professional work.

In the matter of food, for years Gandhiji has been pleading with us for regional self-sufficiency. For years he has been advising big tenants, Zamindars and merchants not to hoard foodgrains. He has been advising the nation to save its food resources by the utmost austerity. But we have not listened to his advice and when in difficulty we conveniently blame the Government. Can any government stop corruption and bribery if the people at every conceivable occasion offer bribes? In other free countries even the richest man, if he arrives late at the railway ticket window takes his place in the queue and would miss his train rather than offer a pretty bribe, which he can well afford, to the booking clerk. In India instead of falling in our proper places everybody rushes to offer a bribe to gain undue advantage over his neighbour. When bribery and corruption is so encouraged, it is no wonder that few public servants are above temptation. That is why even the black-market prospers. If the public are anxious to patronise black-market to tide over temporary difficulties and are not prepared to put up with the denial incidental to shortage of consumers' goods, no government, however public spirited and efficient can help them. The remedy primarily lies in our hands. This, however, does not absolve our governments from responsibility in these matters.

But we must co-operate with our governments and give them some chance to put our house in order. Do we give the necessary co-operation or rather put hindrances in the way of their doing anything constructive? Take for instance the recent communal riots in Bihar. Have the riots in any way lightened the task of the Government? No government can function if people take the law in their own hands. It is said that the riots in Bihar are the result of what the Muslims did in Calcutta and Noakhali. Even if this be true one does not cut one's nose to spite one's face. Two wrongs do not make one right. And we must distinguish between the Muslim League and our Muslim neighbours even though the League has succeeded in

injecting communal poison in the majority of the Muslim community. After all we Hindus make the claim that we love this ancient land. The League has never made this claim. It is not concerned with the good of this country. Rather it believes that internal confusion will give it the opportunity to work its way to power. By indulging in lawlessness we only play into the hands of the national enemies. Then, is revenge and retaliation the way to communal harmony and peace? Calcutta led to Noakhali, Noakhali to Bihar, Bihar to Punjab and the N.W.F.P. If this vicious circle goes on one does not know where it will end. Even now the lengths to which it has driven us are such that we have to hang our heads in shame. Well may the world ask, 'Is this the result of Gandhiji's teachings? Is this the way India preaches the message of love and non-violence to a distracted world?' Non-violence apart, have we even acted upto the laws of revenge and retaliation? It is no retaliation to inflict injury upon those who have never injured us. If the Muslims in Noakhali committed atrocities upon the Hindus, they may have been punished and not their co-religionists in Bihar who had nothing to do with what happened in East Bengal. As a matter of fact this talk of revenge and retaliation between citizens of the same country is sheer perversity and madness. It injures all the three communities and the whole country.

Congress governments cannot allow confusion. If they have to function they must maintain law and order. What has been the result of the riots? Your Government is obliged to spend many crores to rehabilitate Muslims, whose houses and fields have been destroyed and those who in fear and panic have left the province. All this money could have been spent in nation building activity. So utilised, it could have eased the situation in food, clothing and housing. As it is, we keep the Government busy with politics and complain that it is unable to create conditions where the primary requisites of physical existence are satisfied.

Only thoughtful and restrained action at this critical juncture can save us from the perils that lie ahead.

Some of us seem to have an idea that freedom and restraint are contradictory. But we must understand that there can be no human freedom without due restraint. Freedom can exist only within the law. Outside the law there is license and confusion. As in individual so in collective life, the higher the evolution the greater the restraints. Among us Mahatmaji is the most fearless and free person. Yet the restraints that he imposes upon his behaviour, upon his activity, upon his food, clothing and enjoyment are legion. By these restraints he has acquired complete control over himself and that is the secret of his moral influence over others. In the recent communal riots there are instances where people have been guilty of atrocities which only occasionally disfigure a war, cruel and heartless as war is. Why is this so? Because even war recognises some restraints born of mutual fear. It has some organisation behind it and a sense of responsibility and it is subject to certain conventions. In recent communal riots all restraints, religious, moral, social, intellectual and legal were absent. There were no conventional restraints even. What remained was the rule of passion and hatred. We forget that freedom too requires training and there can be no training without discipline and due restraint. If, therefore, we have to achieve our freedom and if our people propose to keep it and if we want to create a society free from injustice and exploitation we must recognise the place of restraint and *sanyam* in our individual and corporate life. Without due restraint there can be no building of character, individual or collective.

## SACRIFICE

*(Press Report of the reply given by Rashtrapati Kripalani to the Welcome Address presented by the students of the Muzaffarpur College 15-2-47 where he was once a Professor.)*

Friends,

While I thank you for the warmth of your welcome, I cannot approve of the expressions you have used to describe the good qualities that I am supposed to possess. I do not know if you have ever seen your face in a magnifying looking glass! I have seen mine and I can tell you the reflection was uglier than the original. When you exaggerate a man's virtues and that too in his hearing, you make him feel not only ridiculous but also, if he has a little self-analysis, awkward. We must exercise a little restraint in the language that we use to describe those whom we wish to honour.

You have talked of my sacrifices. I have never appreciated the use of this word in connection with public work. The word sacrifice has a bad origin. It is connected with primitive human and animal sacrifices. It is connected with killing of others to appease malevolent gods. It is connected with the inflicting of pain and suffering on others for the same purpose. From this it was an easy transition to suppose that the gods will be satisfied if instead of shedding others' blood we offered our own and instead of inflicting pain and suffering we suffered them ourselves. It is said that a good cause prospers with such self-imposed pain. It is therefore no wonder that those who are supposed to undergo such sacrificial suffering should go about with long-drawn faces and sour tempers. To smile, for them, is an unpardonable indulgence of the flesh. Not only are their lives bereft of all joy but like puritans they are never satisfied unless they interfere with the legi-



timate enjoyment of others. These sacrificers walk the earth with downcast eyes, lest their sight fall upon the rich and variegated beauty of nature. I have never in my life understood this attitude born of self-immolation on the altar of public duty. I know that all work, not only public work, entails some deprivation, some pain, some suffering. The man in office and behind the counter, the worker in field and factory have all to put everyday, hours of hard routine work. The work is often tedious and uninteresting. Yet they do it in order to return in the evening to their homes amidst smiling and contented faces. As things stand today, with the majority of men, work is an evil. But they put up with it in order to avoid the greater pain of physical and often intellectual deprivation. They have, as it often happens in life, to choose between two evils. They choose what they consider the lesser evil. The public worker, too, chooses the lesser of the two evils. He too calculates in terms of happiness. I can assure you it would have been impossible for me to stay in this college when our leaders were receiving lathi blows or suffering in other ways. I would have felt ashamed and humiliated to serve a Government that could perpetrate, justify and excuse the Jallianwalabagh massacre. To be with those who were working for the country was more satisfactory for me. Not only was this suffering the lesser of the two evils, but as I know it today, and as I was convinced then, it would make for my growth and evolution. I was simply fulfilling myself. Evolution and growth are often painful. But stunted and arrested growth is more painful. Why is it that in spite of what Gandhiji has suffered in life his face is joyous? Why is he always rippling with hearty and contagious laughter? Why is he so full of fun and humour? It is because in spite of the hardships he has suffered and the strenuous work he does he finds his activities satisfying. He never feels he has sacrificed anything except what is petty and inferior. He has fulfilled himself and in fulfilling himself has served humanity.

The difference between a refined and a crude nature is not one of happiness. Both work for it. But it makes all the difference in the world, what one delights in. While undeveloped natures find their happiness in the pursuit of material ends, refined natures find it in the pursuit of intellectual and spiritual ends. The dog may be satisfied with his bone but not so a refined human being. Therefore it was said that 'man does not live by bread alone'. But whether a person is refined or crude each has to give up some comfort to get what he wants. It is impossible to function in the world without such sacrifice of comfort. The whole world is bound by it. The peasant cannot cultivate the field without the sacrifice of his seed-grain nor can the merchant earn his money if he wants to enjoy the comfort of what he already has. As these do not earn any special merit while working in their particular fields, so a public worker deserves none for undertaking work in the field of his choice. In free countries every citizen has to bear the burden of civic duties. In times of national danger, he has even to sacrifice his life and property. But as everybody does it, nobody thinks of it. The thousands of soldiers who died in the last war, each fighting for his own country, earned no special merit. They did what was expected of every citizen. In India public work is supposed to be nobody's concern. The result is that those who do it are considered to possess some uncommon virtue. As long as this attitude about public work prevails, it will be hard for us to keep our liberty even if we get it by the work of a few or a group of patriots.

Then, sacrifice always looks for reward in the future. But performance of duty should need no reward. The *Gita* says that 'good actions must be performed because such performance is *Dharma*.' If we had conceived work as a duty to be performed, there would have been no unhealthy competition for seats in assemblies, councils and cabinets because of our sacrifices, suffering and jail going. It would appear as if we want to cash here and now what we consider

our sacrifices. About this the *Gita* says that those who work for enjoyment and name, fame and power do get the objects they work for, but they get them for as long as their merit lasts. Ultimately, their merit exhausted, they have to return to this world, *mrityulok*. Such never get *moksha* (freedom). May it not be that the power and positions we enjoy now may come to be lost, our merit (*punya*) exhausted? But fear is that we may bring the country down with us. Therefore we must not talk in terms of our sacrifices for the cause of our country. Whenever I have asked young men to come and join me in national work, I have always asked them to come if they find their personal evolution and satisfaction in it. For I know if they do not find joy in their work they will always be doing it for some ulterior motive, for some reward or only as a stepping stone for better employment in the future. Only when we work with an idea of duty (*dharma*) and find joy in its performance can we raise ourselves and the country.

## THE LAST FIGHT

*(Press Report of a speech delivered at Hajipur,  
Bihar during the Presidential tour. 11-2-47)*

Friends,

This tour is organised not merely for collecting funds, but chiefly for conveying to you the message of the Congress. Collection of funds is incidental. Now that we have our leaders sitting in the seats of the mighty in Delhi and there are Congress governments in the majority of the provinces some people believe that we have achieved Swaraj. But by capturing power, whether in Delhi or in the provinces, we have merely removed the hindrance to the prosperity and progress of our nation. We have not by that achieved either prosperity or progress. These essentials of Swaraj have yet to be achieved. If after the removal of shackles a person refuses to walk he can never reach the goal. We have yet to remove the poverty, and worse than that, the ignorance and apathy of our people. In this task we shall need all those qualities of public service and sacrifice that have brought us near our goal of political independence. But the new task cannot be shouldered by one party or group. What concerns all must be worked for by all. The essence of democracy is that every citizen realizes his responsibility for the common good and works for it. A dictatorship may make people happy and prosperous but it can never make for self-rule which is the essence of our Swaraj. After all how many active Congressmen are there? The most that went to jail during a movement did not exceed 100 000. How many of these remained steady up to the last? How many of those who remained true to the last were not sustained by visions of future success at the polls, local, provincial or central! But even if all the hundred thousand were pure gold they would be crushed under the burden of the

apathy and indifference of 40 crores who have never thought in terms of the country and who have had no training in liberty, which implies the proper discharge of duties that freedom imposes upon every citizen. That we Congressmen who once suffered and sacrificed for the general good and took pride therein are today thinking in terms of self and family, of power and patronage, clearly shows that the burden of reforming forty crores of people is proving too much for us and that instead of raising others we are going down under the burden. To keep their leaders steady, the public must be vigilant and must discharge its duties.

If on the one hand there is smug satisfaction that Swaraj is almost achieved, there in on the other hand, among the radical groups, a demand for the final struggle with British Imperialism. Our friends fail to see that there is no fight left in England. It is exhausted. Today it lacks the man-power and the resources necessary to control a dissatisfied and rebellious people. England has realized that India today, more than ever before, can only be kept in subjugation by terrorist military suppression. This could be done when England was engaged in a life and death struggle with Germany and all her military and other resources were mobilized for a total war. This is no more possible for an exhausted England. It is therefore working for time to make by diplomatic means such arrangements to quit as would be most advantageous to it, politically and commercially.

But even if there is to be a last fight to achieve political liberty it cannot be done merely by propaganda and raising slogans; nor is it done by denouncing the old leadership. It seems we have learnt nothing from Gandhiji. Whenever he wanted the nation to prepare for a struggle, without neglecting propaganda, he tried to convert the old leadership. Above all, he tried to prepare the masses by keeping before them a concrete programme of constructive activity. As in military preparation, so in a non-violent fight the people who have to bear the brunt of the fight have got to

be prepared. In a violent fight it is military preparations. In a non-violent fight Gandhiji has discovered for us a substitute for military preparation and that is the co-operation among ourselves as a result of the working of the Constructive Programme. It trains and disciplines the masses. Our radical friends have neither a scheme of military nor of non-violent preparation. Their substitute for them is publicity, raising of slogans and denunciation of the old leadership, that fails to profit by their newfound wisdom, that fails to profit by their newfound wisdom dom bereft of political maturity and experience.

Yet it cannot be denied that we have to prepare for a final struggle. But this struggle, as I envisage it, is to be against ourselves. We must perfect the Congress organisation and rid it of corruption, power politics, job-hunting, cant and hypocrisy. We must tell our people that the goal has not been reached; that the suffering and sacrifice that has given us our present advantageous position is yet necessary not only to storm the last citadels of foreign domination but to put the country on sound social, economic and political bases.

Nowhere in history have we an example of a party that has worked and suffered for freedom getting exhausted even before its limited goal is fully attained. As soon as the Congress and with it the nation acquired a new vitality shaking off its old apathy, it appears to be in the grip of degeneracy and decadence. We have to guard against this state of affairs. As in religion so in politics our greatest enemies today are within ourselves. Let us fight these enemies and we shall soon establish the Swaraj of which Gandhiji has talked to us so often and which in his spiritual language he calls Ramraj—a democratic society based on justice, equity and non-exploitation of man by man.

## SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE

*(Press Report of an extempore speech delivered on the occasion of the presentation of a Civic Address by the Mysore City Municipal Council—19th March, 1947).*

Friends,

I thank you for the address of welcome that you have given me this evening. I am not so vain as to think that this address is meant for me. I am merely a symbol of our great Organisation, great not because of its numbers and influence but because, for the last few decades, it has struggled for the freedom of this country and in the course of that struggle has suffered and sacrificed much. But even the Congress is nothing if it does not seek to represent and serve the people. By 'the people' the Congress under Gandhiji's lead has meant the toiling and starving masses of India. We have always made it clear that any interests that are inconsistent with the good of these masses shall have no place in a free India.

In this age, when everybody talks of socialism, it should be possible for municipalities, if they conceived their duties properly, to experiment in it. Whatever Government may exist at the centre, or in a province or an Indian state, a Municipality could make yours an ideal city, where there is no able bodied person who is willing to work but goes without work, and as a consequence goes without proper food and clothing; where every citizen has a proper shelter for himself and his family; where all the slums are cleared, where no child is born but is given the opportunity to have the minimum education that would fit him to discharge his civic duties; and where there is no citizen who, when ill, is unable to get medical assistance. All this is quite possible of accomplishment. You can do it if you so will it, and you can show in practice that all the social services can be nationalised, in the case of your city,



municipalised. It will be a great example to the country. After all what is Socialism? It is that we pool our entire resources and work together for the good of each and all. There are cities in Europe where this has been successfully attempted, irrespective of the form of Government at the centre.

Your city compared to other cities in India is clean and beautiful (cheers). Do not be in a hurry to clap. I am afraid all the credit for this cannot be claimed by the municipality. Much of it must go to the State, and yet not even to the State. We know from where the wealth comes that beautifies this one capital city and makes it neat and hygienic. (Of course even here, there are slums and Harijans busties.) However, all this has been done at the expense of the village. In Indian States one or two central cities appear like oases in a desert. I was recently in Travancore where all the roads leading to its capital, Trivandrum, were up-to-date and motorable. Trivandrum itself is a beautiful city, but in the surrounding country one found poverty and squalor. When I ask you to municipalise all social services, I want you to rely principally upon yourself and not on the state which exploits the villages in order to beautify a couple of cities, the seats of the residence of the Maharajah or the Dewan.

How can you do the things I have suggested? One supreme condition is that you conceive of your position in the Municipality, whether as Chairman or as Councillors, to be one of public trust and duty and not of privilege, patronage, power, name and fame. The position to which you have been elected is one of great responsibility. You have been called upon by people for public service. We may not forget that we are blessed in as much as we have been given the opportunity and the privilege to serve the community. Remember, he who serves the community serves himself best. Unfortunately, this attitude towards public duty is hard to acquire in India where our traditional loyalties to particular denominations, castes or joint families continually

infringe on our larger loyalty to the nation. When we want to fill appointments for service, we somehow find that our friends and relations—either on the paternal, maternal or wife's side—are the most fitted for the job under our control. Like the Englishman who believes that what is advantageous to his nation is prescribed by the moral law, we imagine that what benefits our family or our caste, or our province, must necessarily benefit the nation and is prescribed by the moral law. We have a narrow conception of duty which frustrates and often perverts the true end of public welfare. And, I am sorry to say, that not only the Municipal Councillors but our Civil servants and some of our Congress Ministers suffer from this prevailing vice. May be, if I were in charge of some public office I may also act as some of my betters in office are doing. But as an old professor I am able to diagnose the prevailing drawback in our character. If you can take advantage of this analysis it will be well with you, your city and the nation. Only through justice and fairplay will we be able to serve our city well, and through the city, the nation.

## PATCHES OF SANITY

*(An interview with Shri G. Ramachandran,  
May 30th, 1947)*

Q: You have been one of the most convincing exponents of the technique of non-violent action as conceived by Gandhiji. Do you not think it strange, that the Congress which fought the British successfully for Indian independence should now think of fighting the adherents of the Muslim League who indulge in violence, violently? If non-violence was good enough against the foreigner, why is it not good enough against our own countrymen, with whom we have lived together for so many centuries?

A: I do not think the Congress is contemplating any violent action, even defensive, against any violent Muslim Leaguers. No doubt there are individual Congressmen who, unable to find a non-violent way out of the present dangerous situation, talk of defending honour, life and property even violently if necessary. But the Congress as an organisation still adheres to non-violence even in the present conflict with the Muslim League. That does not mean the Congress has discovered the new technique of non-violence needed to meet the new situation created by widespread communal violence inside the household, so to say. You see, in fighting the British we were fighting something which had some defined shape and some well-settled ways. As such we were fighting something which had a certain minimum amount of law and procedure and some conventional decency. But today, in the present communal troubles, we are faced with stabbers in the back, murderers in the dark, who spare neither child nor woman nor the weak and who run away after doing their criminal, cowardly and gruesome deeds. We are not called upon to fight even the Muslim League as such because some of their leaders still use the language of non-violence

and repudiate responsibility for the deeds inspired by their attitude and the words of hate that they used. Therefore this thing which we are called upon to fight has neither any tangible shape nor form nor any decency. If we are to fight this thing non-violently then our old technique of non-violence, which was used by the bulk of the population against a governmental minority which constantly needed their co-operation, will not do. We need a new technique. Gandhiji, as our expert, is experimenting with it already. Even he has not succeeded yet. On his success, however, will depend the success of the Congress, so long as it is wedded to non-violence. In the meantime we, who believe in non-violence, can only guard ourselves as individuals against being caught in the storm of insanity which has overtaken our people. The storm cannot last. No storm does. But when it is over, it is we, who will have kept our sanity even in these dark days, who will be able to reconstruct good-will where temporarily the storm has swept it away. I think the greatest service we can all now do is to retain, as individuals of good-will, our sanity in the face of the storm which is sweeping the country.

Q: I follow what you say. But is there nothing more positive you can do as the Rashtrapathi who is a convinced votary of the non-violent way? Why should Bapu alone bear the terrible burden? Should not other leaders like you join in the experiment or make your own experiments? The common man is confused to-day hearing conflicting counsel from different quarters. If mental confusion is wrong in normal times, will it not be fatal in the coming days of crisis?

A: I confess I am unable to find straightway the proper non-violent answer to the present tragic situation. It is not that I shirk thinking of it. In fact, I think of little else. What can we do? Violence appears tempting with its own plausible logic, its short-cuts and it pays heavy immediate premiums; but that will take us nowhere ultimately. It will only feed the conflagration. And what we want is to put it out. We can

at best form small peace groups, or shall I say 'Death Groups' which will walk out to face death without any fear whatsoever where the conflagration rages. But such groups might not be attacked; they will get some kind of unreal immunity, while the common folk will still be slaughtered. Also, such groups might reach the places of conflagration only after the destruction is over and then what may await them will not be martyrdom but primarily rehabilitation work. That may mean waiting upon the government concerned to obtain adequate relief for the sufferers or appealing to people to come to the aid of the sufferers in relief camps or inducing them to return to their homes. This is, complicated, slow and laborious work, may be more difficult than martyrdom, but it does not solve the problem. But I admit these difficulties only add to the challenge of the situation. At the moment everyone is waiting for H.M.G.'s announcement on June 2. We shall know where we stand after that and we might then be able to get groups to work at the thing. Not that I personally would ask anyone to wait for any statement from anybody. Our task is clear. As I said, some of us must remain sane in spite of everything and we must help in creating as many cells of sanity as possible in the country.

Q: Supposing a few determined, experienced and devoted workers came forth to do the kind of work you have suggested, will you give them personal guidance and support?

A: Most certainly. But we should not indulge in any heroics. What we do must be silent and the right service unto death. And because this thing we have to fight is a blind, cruel and shapeless thing, it will call forth from us the utmost that human nature can give.

Q: Will you then take up this question and give a call to those who might be willing to face the ordeal?

A: Who am I to give such a call? In this matter we have only one leader in India, why in the whole world, and that is Bapu. It is for him to give the call. We can only place before him our thoughts. If we do some-

thing rash we might only succeed in embarrassing him in his great experiment. But this I know, that if any of us can feel within us the same faith that moves him then we can act on our own, provided again, we are willing to pay the utmost price. The question is how many of us have that faith in non-violence.

## A BED OF THORNS

*(Concluding Speech, A.I.C.C. Meeting, Delhi  
June 15, 1947)*

When I became the President, Gandhiji in one of his prayer meetings said that it was not a crown of thorns that I had to wear but I had to lie on a bed of thorns. I never realized that it would be literally so. On the 16th October, 1946 my name was announced as the President and on the 17th I had to fly to Noakhali. After that I had to go to Behar and now recently to the Punjab. It is not that many innocent lives are lost. For me it does not matter how many men or women are killed. What has affected me is the sight that our respective religions are being degraded. Both the communities have borrowed from each other the worst instrument of violence, so that in the latest communal frenzy more cruel and heartless things have been done than at any previous time. I have seen a well where women with their children, 105 in all, threw themselves. In one place 50 women immolated themselves to save their honour in a place of worship, where they had taken refuge. At another place I saw the bones and skulls of little children who had been collected together and burnt alive. This has definitely affected my approach to the question. Some have said that we have taken this decision out of fear. I must admit the truth of this charge. But fear not in the sense the term is used. The fear is not that so many lives are lost but that there is the widow's wail and the orphan's cry and houses burnt. The fear is that if we go on like this, retaliating and heaping indignities upon each other, we shall be progressively reducing ourselves to a state of cannibalism and worse. In every fresh communal fight the most brutal and degraded acts of the previous fight become the norm. Thus we keep on degrading each other, and all in the name of religion. I am a Hindu and am proud of the fact. But this is because Hinduism for me



has stood for toleration, for truth and for non-violence. If it no more stands for these ideals and if in order to defend, people have to indulge in crimes worse than cannibalism, then I must hang down my head in shame. And I may tell you, often I have felt and said that in these days one is ashamed to call oneself a Hindu or an Indian.

I have been with Gandhiji for the last 30 years. I joined him in Champaran. I have never swayed in my loyalty to him. It is not a personal but a political loyalty. *Even when I have differed from him. I have considered his political instinct to be more correct than my elaborately reasoned attitudes. Today, also. I feel that he with his supreme fearlessness is correct and my stand is defective.* Why then am I not with him? It is because I feel he has as yet found no way of tackling the problem on a mass basis. When he taught us non-violent non-co-operation he showed us a definite method which we could at least mechanically follow. Today what he wants of average men and women is pure martyrdom. He was in Noakhali. His efforts eased the situation. Then he was in Behar. The situation was again eased. But this did not stop the flare-up in the Punjab. He says he is solving the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity for the whole of India in Behar. May be. But it is difficult to see how this is being done. There are no definite steps as in non-violent non-co-operation that an average citizen, who is not prepared for the final sacrifice, can follow. Another drawback of the present situation is that today Gandhiji can mainly enunciate policies. These policies have to be carried out by others and these others are not converted to Gandhiji's way of thinking and working.

It is under these painful circumstances that I acquiesced in the division of India. You know I belong by birth to what is now Pakistan. My relatives and friends yet live there. When as back as 1906 I began my political career, I never thought that I was working for the liberty of any particular portion of India. I worked for the whole of India. Every nook and corner, every stream

and mountain of this land, is sacred to me. It shall so remain even after this artificial partition that separates brother from brother. Already, in my opening speech, I have said that in India at least one must not think in communal terms but in terms of Indian citizenship and in this respect I commend Mahatmaji's advice given to us yesterday. If there is to be a united India again, his policy alone will work.

Fear has been expressed that this decision does not and cannot stop communal rioting. This fear may be well or ill-founded. For the time being, the prophets of evil seem to be in ascendency. How are then future riots to be tackled? Will they be tackled, as recently, on the basis of reprisals and retaliation? This question I have already tried to answer in my Presidential address at Meerut. It said then that "as the Centre had refused to function the provinces became virtually independent. The Government of Behar should have given a warning to the Government of Bengal that if the Hindus who were living there were cruelly treated the Behar Government, with the best will in the world, will not be able to protect the lives of the Muslims resident there." This means that the issue is raised to the international level where organised governments deal with each other. It is taken out of the hands of the excited mob fury that knows no morality, no law, no restraint. Mob fury is always blind. International violence has some system and some method about it. *I am sure that those who hold the reins of authority, after August 15th, in India, will make it their duty to see that justice is done to the Hindu minorities resident in Pakistan.* If my words carry weight with the Pakistan section of India I would say: "Let the two Constituent Assemblies appoint a Joint Committee to go into the matter of the minority rights." This may ensure us against hysteric individuals and fanatical mobs taking the work of vengeance upon themselves.

We have passed just now the resolution on the States. In this connection I would suggest one thing. Let the people of all those States who have not yet sent

their representatives to the Constituent Assembly do so themselves. Wherever Legislative Assemblies exist, let these Assemblies as in British India elect their representatives to the Constituent Assembly by single transferable vote. Where no such Assemblies exist, other devices may be used to elect representatives. Such representatives have a right to sit in our Constituent Assembly which is a sovereign body. In our Fundamental Rights Committee we have postulated one common citizenship of India. Every State citizen is an Indian Citizen and he has a right to be represented in the Indian Constituent Assembly. No Dewan coming from outside the State can limit this right of the citizen. We need the State people's help and advice in framing a constitution for India. We are no more hide bound to the document of May 16th. Today ours is a sovereign assembly. No court of law here in India or outside has any jurisdiction over our Constituent Assembly. Now that it has met and has made its own own rules of procedure it cannot even be dissolved except by its own vote. I do not see why the States People's representatives cannot be allowed in our Constituent Assembly.

In conclusion I would say: Let us not rest content with the freedom that we shall be having shortly. Let us bend all our energies to the goal of unification which we have missed, to achieve our freedom quickly. In this task we shall need all the devoted service and sacrifice that we have needed in our fight for freedom. Let us abandon all power politics. Let us again be beggars that we were when we courted jail, lathi blows and bullets. Let us again bend all our energies to this new task which is as important as the achievement of freedom. This freedom cannot be complete without the unity of India. Divided India will be slave India. Let us therefore get out of this second slavery as quickly as we can. Let all the new opportunities we have to mould our own destiny, be henceforward directed to this supreme goal of Indian Unity. In this task may God help us. *Bande Mataram.*

## A JUST CONSEQUENCE OF AN UNJUST ACT

*(Press statement dated 24-6-47)*

For Congressmen to whom unity of India is an article of faith, the proposed division of India into two states is a misfortune. But once this division was forced on us the partition of Bengal and the Punjab was inevitable. It is a just consequence of an unjust act. However, now that the partition is an accomplished fact, it will do good to neither party to rake up the past and apportion blame. Our business should at present be to accept the inevitable without bitterness and make the best of what has happened. The sooner the separated parts begin to function independently the better for both. Each will then realise the magnitude of the constructive tasks that lie ahead and will have neither time nor energy left for mutual recrimination.

The reports from Lahore are shocking. The city is practically at the mercy of goondas and assassins. Those who are indulging in this death dance are enemies of both Hindus and Muslims and must be treated as such. It is the duty of those who still are in effective control of India to take the most drastic measures to restore the normal civilized life of the city. Those who worked up the communal fury of the ignorant masses must also accept the responsibility of controlling the passions they have roused.

## NATIONAL FLAG

*(Press statement dated 24-7-1947)*

As some people have expressed doubts and asked questions about the Flag to be hoisted on the 15th of August by Congressmen and Congress Committees, I have to make the position clear. The Congress has for the past many years adopted the tricolour flag in Khadi with Charkha in the middle as the National Flag. This flag is hoisted on every occasion of national importance. It is also hoisted on premises owned or occupied by the Congress Committees and on the buildings of such local bodies as are under the influence of the Congress. This flag has been widely used by the general public. This National Flag can only be altered by a resolution of the All-India Congress Committee. The last meeting of the Working Committee, however, recommended that the new flag adopted by the Indian Constituent Assembly be accepted by the Congress organisation. Till this recommendation of the Working Committee is accepted by the All-India Congress Committee, the old flag of Khadi with Charkha in the middle continues to be the National Flag in terms of the Congress organisation. As, however, the Working Committee have approved of the new flag, Congressmen and Congress Committees are free to use any of these two flags till the position is regularised by a resolution of the All-India Congress Committee. However, as it may not be possible in the countryside to secure the new flag in time for August 15 and as large stocks of the old flag may be lying unused, it is desirable for practical reasons to use the old flag till such stocks are exhausted. Wherever the new flag is used, Congressmen and Congress organisation can use only hand-spun and hand-woven cotton or silk cloth for it.

## REPLY TO MR. LIAQAT ALI

*(Press statement dated 11-8-1947, Karachi)*

I have seen Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan's statement of 11th August, 1947 wherein he charges me with having advised the minorities in the Pakistan areas not to participate in the celebrations of August 15th. I wish Mr. Liaquat Ali had quoted my exact words in which I gave this advice. Immediately after the last meeting of the Working Committee held in the middle of July in Delhi, I issued a circular about the celebrations of the Indian Independence Day in the Pakistan areas for the guidance of the Congress Committees. The circular said that the Congress Committees in the Pakistan areas were not to organize celebrations for the liberation of India. This had nothing to do with the celebrations undertaken by the Pakistan Government. As a matter of fact, responsible League leaders had made no announcement of the celebrations on the 15th in the Pakistan areas. The question of participation in the celebrations of the 15th organized by the Pakistan Government was placed before me by Congressmen and the members of the minority communities when I came to Sind. To them in public and in private my advice was that all those who feel the glow of a free Pakistan must participate in the celebrations. But for those who feel no such glow and are not happy over the division of the country, to participate in the celebrations would be an act of hypocrisy dictated by self-interest. Such participation would benefit neither the participants nor the Government.

Defining the attitude of the minorities towards the Pakistan State I said at the Press Conference held on 3rd August at Karachi: "All citizens of any particular area must be loyal citizens of the State. They must give it honourable co-operation but resist all attempts at aggression and tyranny. If honourable existence in

the State is not possible and if their (minorities') efforts to reform the government altogether fail and if they have no hope of reforming the government, it would be open to them to leave the country. I do not advise anybody to leave the country. I do not want you to be afraid because of past events. Past events have left their legacy and for some time things will be disturbed but I feel sure that if Pakistan wants to exist as an independent country it will have to co-operate with India and it will have to give a fair deal to the minorities.

"The Congress has not given up the ideal of a united India. In fact I hold that there can be no peace or prosperity for the two parts of India unless they come close together. There is no question of oneness. We have a federal constitution and the provinces whether in Pakistan or in India will have the maximum provincial sovereignty, consistent with the defence of the country and its prosperity. The ideal of isolated independence will have to be progressively abandoned by governments all over the world. The Congress will make all peaceful efforts to achieve its ideal of a united India."

Again when I was asked whether India would come to the aid of Pakistan in case the new State was attacked by another power, I stated that Pakistan would get all the help from India if it asked for it.

Asked about my mission in Sind I said that I had come to Sind as a Sindhi at a time considered troublesome. I advised Sindhis not to have any difference among themselves whether they were Hindus or Muslims.

In some of the meetings I addressed, I referred to the slogans raised by some Muslims in Sind and elsewhere and which I have heard myself "Hus ke lia Pakistan, Larkey lenge Hindustan." About this I ventured to warn both the communities against thinking in terms of one part invading the other. I asked people who raised such cries to visualise the results. I said that before the Indian armies reached the borders of Pakistan the Hindus in Pakistan will be made to suffer dire consequences. They would at least be all thrown into



concentration camps. The same would be the case if the Pakistan armies attempted an invasion of India. I think I was justified in giving this warning to the fanatics of both the communities. I thought I would be failing in my duty if I did not sound this note of warning. I gave this warning because I love both the communities and I gave it more on humanitarian than on communal grounds. If any side thinks of invading the territory of the other, I am sure rivers of innocent blood would flow. What has happened in the near past will be a mere flee-bite to what may happen under such circumstances.

I am conscious of having said nothing, which would in any way exacerbate the already bitter feelings that exist between the two communities. Instead of putting words in my mouth which I had never uttered, I would have wished in fairness to me that a man of the responsible position of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan had quoted the exact words that I used at meetings and at Press Conferences that could be remotely construed as exciting communal passions, during my brief stay in Sind. Then Sind is scarcely a place to excite the Hindus who themselves are in the grip of abject fear. If a Hindu is communally inclined he would go to the Hindu majority province in India rather than come to Pakistan. I may also add that I told my audiences that I have come to Sind not as the President of the Congress but as a Sindhi who is interested in the welfare of both the communities. I have my own people in both the communities. I came to advise both the sides to live in peace and amity. I know the average Sindhi Muslim is a peace loving citizen. He does not suffer from religious fanaticism, brought up as he is, in the Sufi traditions of the province. But I also know that the communal frenzy in these days may make him lose his balance. This I know would be to the disadvantage of the community to which I have the honour to belong. I came to warn him (the Sindhi Muslim) against being excited as I came to put heart in the Hindus and asked them not to act under the influence of fear and not to think in terms of



exodus. I made it plain to the Hindus at the risk of being misunderstood that Congress Governments may not extend to them the same facilities as the League Governments in Bengal and Sind did to the Muslim refugees.

I wonder if it has come to the notice of Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan that the Hindu communalists received me everywhere with aggressive demonstrations of black flags and cries of 'go back'. If the communalists of both the sides find fault with me and my utterances, I feel sure I must be right and must have spoken some sense.

## AUGUST FIFTEENTH

The long-awaited day of India's freedom is come. Her centuries-old slavery has ended. The people's representatives are at last in the seats of the mighty. Those who were reviled and despised have come to their own. For this day our patriots through the last several decades worked and suffered. Many of them who fought for this day are not in our midst to rejoice with us. They suffered so that others may enjoy. They died so that others may live in peace, freedom and honour. To the memory of all those known and unknown patriots we pay our humble tribute of love and honour.

We are thankful that our leader in this righteous fight, the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, under whose saintly guidance we have lived to see this day, is yet in our midst. To him as a free people we pay our homage. He has written a new chapter in the history of the world, for he has led this nation to achieve by truth and non-violence what always was achieved through war and violence, through bloody revolution with its trail of misery and suffering. May he live long in our midst to guide us in the constructive tasks that lie ahead of us.

His and his nation's dream has not been completely fulfilled. As often happens in human affairs, our achievement has fallen short of our goal. We wanted a free and united India. What we have is a free India, divided and distracted. The result is that many of our countrymen whose hearts are lacerated at the division of the motherland are in mourning today. Our joy cannot, therefore, be as complete as it would have been, had India, on this historic day, remained one and undivided. May be that our suffering and sacrifice were not great enough for the double task of unity and freedom.

However, we may not forget that the unity we had under the British rule was a unity in slavery. It was an artificial unity imposed from above by our masters

who held both Hindus and Muslims in their iron grip. What we need is a free, spontaneous and organic unity—unity not only of political institutions and laws imposed upon us by the foreigner, but the unity of heart, of common purpose, common effort and a common goal. This can only be achieved by our own efforts and such efforts can fructify only when communities that have been kept apart by the foreigner are free to think and act independently.

Let us, therefore, not rest content with the liberty we have achieved today. Let us henceforward bend all our energies to the unification of this land of ours. In this task we shall need all the undivided effort and devotion that we brought to the cause of freedom. Let us abandon all thoughts of ease, comfort and self and resume the path of sacrifice and suffering that has brought us where we are. This unity that we so ardently desire can only be achieved if we, who are privileged to be the citizens of the Indian Union, cease to think in communal terms. Let no citizen of the Indian Union think of himself as a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or Parsi but as an Indian—Indian first and Indian last. Let him also not think in terms of retaliation and reprisal. The two major communities have tried this long enough and today there is murder, loot and arson in many parts of India. We are as far from unity today as ever before. Let us, therefore, after this bitter experience change the methods that we have employed so far. May be, as in the case of our liberty so in the case of our unity the salvation lies, even as Mahatma Gandhi has indicated, through non-violence and truth.

Above all let us try to make the Indian Union great and prosperous. If we in our portion of India are able to evolve a new order of society based on democracy and social justice, where all power and profit belong to where they should—to the workers in the field and factory—we would provide the greatest inducement to our seceding countrymen to rejoin us and work with us. This is also the way to preserve our new found liberty.

## AN APPEAL TO SANITY

*(Radio broadcast from Calcutta, dated 5-9-1947)*

I was in Calcutta on the memorable three days of Independence, the 14th, 15th & 16th. After nearly one year of fraternal fighting and living in constant fear this great city seemed to have found its soul at last. There was joy in every heart. Hindus and Muslims, men, women and children, freely and fearlessly mixed in localities that were practically closed to each community for months. The celebrations were neither organised by the Congress nor by the Muslim League, nor even by the new Free Government of India or Bengal. They were spontaneous. They were the expression of the joy of new found freedom, freedom from foreign yoke that made people forget their internal differences. Hindus and Muslims joined to cry victory to Bharat Mata. It did one's eyes and heart good to witness this great manifestation of neighbourly love between the communities. Everywhere the question was asked if this miraculous birth of the new spirit of concord and love will last. The pessimists of both communities shook their heads in doubt. Today the doubts of these prophets of evil unfortunately seem to have come true. The communal frenzy has suddenly restarted after a fortnight of peace. Again the people of Calcutta live in fear. Fear is the greatest enemy of mankind. It clouds the judgment and rouses the worst passions.

In the present flare up, however, there is a silver lining. The generality of people who tasted the joy of free and fearless movement and intercourse are fortunately against this new flare up. With mass backing and Governmental support it should not be difficult to isolate and inoculate the goondas of both the communities whether they be of the communal or the usual variety. I would warn my Sikh and Hindu friends from the

Punjab against exciting communal feelings here if they wish well to their co-religionists in their province. The best way to save their people today is to free Mahatmaji from Bengal and allow him to proceed to the Punjab.

It would be idle for me to talk of the virtues of living in peace, of neighbourly love and non-violence. I would only talk to you in terms of our self-interest. After all what do the warring Hindus and Muslims want? They possibly cannot hope to eliminate each other from India. They want to protect their religion and their community. Apart from the fact that no religion can be protected by loot, arson, murder, the killing of innocent children and the dishonouring of women, are the communities taking proper measures even to save the members of their own community? In a war, if it is necessary to keep one's sword sharp, it is equally necessary to have firm hold upon one's shield. A soldier who merely thinks of offence and never of his own safety may be brave like a Rajput warrior of old, but he can never succeed. Let no Hindu forget that though he is in a majority in West Bengal he is in a minority in East Bengal. If he can offend the Muslim here and think that he will get away with it, he is living in a delusion which may mean the destruction of his co-religionist in East Bengal. The same applies to a Muslim who offends the Hindu in the areas where the Muslims are in a majority. He may not forget that there are pockets of defenceless Muslims in Hindu majority areas and he may be injuring their safety by his foolish action. We have so mismanaged our affairs that today we have got into a vicious circle. The communities act and react against each other. Some community in some province must break through this vicious circle and show the right way to the other community and the other provinces. The encircling chain of retaliation and reprisals must be broken somewhere if there is not to be virtual annihilation of both the communities and if we are not to become the laughing stock of the world. Our name today is in the mud. 'None so poor as would do us reverence.'

On the 15th I had expected that the experience of Calcutta will prove contagious for the whole of India. Unfortunately the Punjab did not respond to it. Let not what happened and is happening in the Punjab blur the clear vision that we were privileged to see here in Calcutta on the independence day. Let it not be said of us Bengalese that we are carried away by gusts of emotion. Let us be faithful to the light that dawned on the 15th.

I am loath to appeal to you in the name of Mahatmaji. So far as he is concerned it is immaterial whether he lives or dies. He has already made himself immortal. His old body cannot last long. He knows that as long as it is God's will nobody can touch him, not even he himself. As often as there is danger he shall be saved. He knows also that when the call from on High comes he will die of any of the many ailments he suffers from, if not from sheer old age. To him life and death make no difference. But remember, it shall make all the difference for those whom God in His wrath makes responsible for his departure from this world. Not only this generation, but generations to come will have to bear the shame of his death. Today it cannot be said that he gives up his precious life because of the misdeeds of a foreign Government. He gives it up because of our own dark deeds. At this, his age, every hour that the fast is prolonged is full of danger. Let us therefore do the right and the just thing in time to save his precious life. May God give us the strength and the wisdom to do so. Jai Hind.

## CURE OF PANIC

(Press statement, dated 20th Sept. 1947, Karachi)

✓ "I hold with Gandhiji that neither the Hindus in Pakistan nor the Muslims in India should desert their ancestral homes. They must remain there even at the risk of their lives. This was my position during my last visit. This is the stand I take even today," says Acharya J. B. Kripalani, the Congress President, in a statement to the press.

"In whatever language couched and with whatever reservation, I appreciate the welcome accorded to me by *"The Dawn"* of Karachi. I do not wish to discuss with the Editor the several statements made against me and the organisation to which I have the honour to belong. But I must point out to him the fact that if I had been an extremist Hindu, I would have not been in the Congress but in the Hindu Mahasabha or the R.S.S.

"I have always wanted and advocated peace between the two communities. I have often spoken, written and broadcast against retaliation and reprisals. I am opposed to such methods on ethical and humanitarian grounds.

"I have always said that whatever action is to be taken must be taken, not by the people but by the Governments as between two independent states whose interests are mostly common.

"Last time I came to Sind not to excite communal feelings but to put heart among the Hindus. No impartial observer can deny that the effect of my speeches was to arrest the exodus of Hindus from Sind.

"I believe that the communal problem cannot be solved by the transfer of population. It can only be solved by good will. I feel common interest requires of the two communities and the two countries, Pakistan and India, to live in peace and amity with each other.



And therefore, though I do not favour the large scale panicky migration that is taking place, I am convinced that the best means of checking it is to give every facility to those who wish to migrate. Putting hindrance in their way is to intensify their panic.

"I have no doubt that if the Government allows the people to migrate in peace and with goodwill, not only will the exodus slow down with the decrease of panic, but many of those who are going will return. The main thing is to create confidence in the minority community.

"Thousands of Hindus who are leaving Sind at the present moment belong to the learned professions or commerce or are small land holders. They mostly belong to the middle classes. They have their own homes and lands. They have, as Indian conditions go, a high standard of living. They know that they will have to begin life anew in India. They are leaving, in the aggregate, crores worth of property here. Few of them will get the physical comforts that they are used to. Most of them will be paupers. They know that the cities and towns in other Indian provinces where they will go are already overcrowded and short of food. If in spite of these facts, which are well-known and well-realised, they choose to leave their native land and their ancestral homes they must have very real and substantial reasons for doing this. It cannot be mere panic. It is for the Government and the majority community to investigate these causes and afford relief. The conditions that I have here described apply today to portions of India so far as the Muslim population is concerned. Therefore common interest requires that we put our heads together and check the fear that has overtaken both the communities and the country.

"In Bengal, Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Suhrawardy took counsel with each other. Mr. Suhrawardy is a man of robust common sense. He knows the interests of his own community. He joined the Mahatma and there is peace in Bengal. This peace may not last if similar counsels do not prevail in the rest of India. My recent visit is to make myself available, if I may, to both the commu-



nities for mutual good understanding. I have not come to encourage migration. I leave on the 22nd instant for the meeting of the Working Committee of the Congress. But I return to Sind and keep my services at the disposal of both the communities as also the Government of Pakistan."

## TO MINIMISE EVIL IS TO CONDONE IT

*(Press statement, 27th September, 1947)*

My attention has been drawn to the statements made by the Premier of Sind at a press conference at Karachi on 25th September about the evacuee and communal situation in Sind. In the interest of the two countries and communities, I would like to avoid all controversy. I entered into none when I was in Sind. I have remained silent since my return here. I would not have broken this silence but for the fact that Shri Sucheta Devi's and my names have been mentioned by the Sind Premier. He says: "Mr. J. B. Kripalani, the President of the All India Congress, was here the other day with Mrs. Kripalani. They have seen the conditions personally and I hope that they will be able to dispel from Maulana Abul Kalam Azad the wrong impressions under which he seems to be labouring."

This portion of the Premier's statement suggests that Shri Sucheta Devi and myself saw no such communal situation as necessitated Hindu exodus. This is far from the truth. In my press statement from Karachi (dated September 20th) only a small and unimportant portion of which was flashed to India by the Press Agency, I had said: "I have no doubt that if the Government allows the people to migrate in peace and with goodwill, not only will the exodus slow down with the decrease of panic, but many of those who are going will return. The main thing is to create confidence in the minority community. Thousands of Hindus who are leaving Sind at the present moment belong to the learned professions or commerce or are small land-holders. They belong mostly to the middle classes. They have their own homes and lands. They have, as Indian conditions go, a high standard of living. They know that they will have to begin life anew in India. They are leaving, in the aggregate, crores worth of property

here. Few of them will get the physical comforts that they are used to. Most of them will be paupers. They know that the cities and towns in other Indian provinces where they will go are already over-crowded and short of food. If, inspite of these facts, which are well-known and well-realised, they choose to leave their native land and their ancestral homes they must have very real and substantial reasons for doing this. It cannot be mere panic. It is for the Government and the majority community to investigate these causes and afford relief." This was written after I had been in Karachi for a couple of days and made searching inquiries from persons of undoubted veracity about what was happening.

On the following day, I had an interview with the Governor-General of Pakistan. I drew his attention to the hardships of the minority community in Sind, the general insecurity of their life and property, the arbitrary and illegal way their houses were broken into and forcibly occupied, their luggage at the ports and at the railway stations searched and their belongings confiscated, etc. I have since sent him a report of what Shri Sucheta Devi herself saw and the complaints made to her both at Hyderabad and Karachi. She visited the Karachi Port and Hyderabad Station. She also saw how the Muslim evacuees were lodged in Hindu public institutions including places considered sacred. If this report was not released to the press it is because we do not want in any way to add to communal passions and so far as possible want to seek redress through friendly negotiations. There are enough statements about the hardships of Hindus in Sind published by Dr. Choithram and other Sindhi leaders. They do not bear out the contention of the Premier of Sind.

However, no useful purpose will be served by charges and counter-charges. What is needed is an honest, bold and concerted effort on the part of both the states to control the rising flood of hatred, violence and lawlessness that threatens to deprive them of the fruits of independence. The three communities, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, have perpetrated terrible crimes

against innocent humanity. The *Karma* of their misdeeds cries for retribution unless it is counteracted by the goodwill and good deeds of all the God-fearing and humanity-loving individuals of the three communities. Let us join this small group at whose head stands Mahatma Gandhi whose faith in human love and goodness has not wavered even in the darkest hour. Let us strengthen his hands. May be, as in Noakhali, Bihar and Calcutta he can yet work the miracle of peace and goodwill in the rest of India. In the meantime let there be no mutual recrimination and let no man minimise the responsibility of his community. To minimise evil is in a way to condone it.

## MESSAGE OF GANDHI

*(Radio Talk on Gandhiji's birthday, 2nd October, 1947)*

On this auspicious day I can pay no truer homage to Gandhiji than to try to interpret to you, in my humble way, the significance of his message, in the context of what is happening now. In the darkness that surrounds us, his is the only ray of light that points the way. In the confusion that prevails, his is the only voice that does not falter. We may lack the wisdom and the strength to walk the way and heed the voice. But it behoves us to know and to try to understand where the way leads and what the voice says. This is the least that we owe to him, who has led us to victory once and who may do so again and who is universally acclaimed as the Father of this nation.

Gandhiji seeks to solve the communal problem, as he did the political problem of independence, through non-violence. This is but natural. However, many of those who followed and worked with him, whether they are in the government or outside, believe that the problem cannot be tackled by pure non-violence. They believe that in fighting British rule in India, they were fighting an organisation that had some shape and form and some roughly defined ways of work and operation. The non-violent resister was fighting an institution which, however tyrannical, had a certain minimum of law and procedure. It had some conventional decency. Often it ruled by means of ordinances. They were bad and cruel laws. But they were laws all the same. Even a bad law is better than no law, better than chaos and confusion. A bad law at least tells you where you stand. It enables you to form certain expectations and take, if need be, necessary precautions. But chaos is without form. It makes life uncertain\* and precarious. It creates fear and anxiety complexes which benumb thought and make action difficult. The

present communal burst-up has resulted in this rule of chaos. We are faced here with stabbers in the back, murderers in the dark, who spare neither child nor woman nor the weak. They have no code of honour. They respect no rule, no law, no morality.

Moreover, in fighting foreign rule, India was fighting a minority that had financial and organisational power but not the might of numbers. This ruling minority relied upon the co-operation of the people, even as a mill or a factory relies on the co-operation of labour. It was therefore possible to paralyse the government by the simple process of withdrawing this co-operation. This kind of non-co-operation, if it is to succeed, has, like the industrial strike, to be necessarily non-violent, specially in the case of a people who have been unarmed and have never learnt the use of arms. Gandhiji of course did not want mere non-co-operation or physically non-violent resistance. What he aimed at was something higher and nobler, far more positive and vital. He wanted Satyagraha, the non-violent and truthful resistance of the brave and the fearless, not that of the weak who takes to peaceful methods out of physical necessity. It is well known that the Congress did not accept the full implications of Gandhiji's doctrine of non-violence. The Congress creed pledged its members to peaceful and legitimate, and not to non-violent and truthful, means. The difference is significant.

Gandhiji knew the difference. Yet in practice he accepted this limitation, though always insisting upon non-violence in thought, word and deed. In this Gandhiji followed the prophets and reformers of old, who were content to accept from the average follower the observance of mechanical rules, in the hope that such observance would create the right habits and by slow degrees convert the heart and the mind. Gandhiji's expectations have not altogether been belied. Many of those who joined him, merely because his non-violent method of fight with the British was the most effective under the circumstances, have since, by the conscious practice of it, come to realize the beauty and efficacy

of Satyagraha, the non-violence of the brave. With such non-violence is no mere policy but a moral creed, which cannot be abandoned and which must at all times guide their conduct in every sphere of life's activity—social, political and economic. But for the great majority of Congressmen, Satyagraha is only a means of non-violent warfare which they followed mechanically. It worked, even as a strike works. That is, like a strike, it often fails at critical moments and is speedily suppressed. But such set-backs, though they prolong the struggle for independence, cannot permanently injure the movement. Each defeat paves the way for the final victory.

What, however, we have to oppose in the present communal frenzy is not any settled government or even an organised party, but, as we have said, a shapeless, lawless chaos. Moreover, the struggle is not of the majority against a small minority, but usually of a minority, often a very small minority, against the majority. Mere physical strike and non-co-operation will not therefore work. They will rather lead to more effective retaliation from the majority community. What then is the remedy? The remedy is not to abandon non-violence, but to adopt the more truthful, vital and dynamic form of it, which Gandhiji has called Satyagraha.

What therefore Gandhiji insists upon today is not the mere mechanical observance of it, but a firm and abiding faith in it; in other words, not the non-violence of the weak (brave though it be, judged from military standards) but the non-violence of the strong.

Today Gandhiji realises more than ever that what he had accepted hitherto for the national struggle was not the true coin. He had failed to distinguish between Satyagraha and non-co-operation or passive resistance. Nature, he feels, had put the veil of *maya* on him to get its work done, or else he had ample and repeated proofs that what he was getting was a base copy of the original. Congressmen were fighting the British non-violently but with hatred in their hearts. They had no love either

for the Englishman or for his benighted or selfish Indian agents. Whenever the provocation was too great, the people lapsed into violence. Their suffering and sacrifice were not quite disinterested. They were often tainted by the lure of office, position, power and the economic and other advantages these brought.

Such non-co-operation or passive resistance will not work in the present context, when the Satyagrahi has to stand and work in opposition, not only to the majority, but often to his own community, its prejudices and its sectional patriotism. He has to fight his own sentiments. It is difficult for him not to be swayed by his natural sympathy for his kith and kin, specially in a struggle whose seeds, he knows, were deliberately and wantonly sown by the other side. By a slight over-emphasis he may feel satisfied that his own community is being wrongly and unjustly treated. Under the stress of passion and anger, he can easily forget his *dharma* of non-violence and be betrayed into what he considers justifiable retaliatory violence.

Retaliatory violence must make the original violence, which is sought to be combated, the norm in a subsequent fight. As in war, so in this communal frenzy, the means and methods employed in each successive outburst become progressively more ruthless and inhuman. The result is, that today there is no horror that is not perpetrated by the three communities, that are party to this civil strife. There is such a blind fury that a community does not mind injuring its own best interest provided it can inflict what it considers greater injury on the rival community. In that blindness they shake the very foundations of the new state and put their new-found freedom in jeopardy. The Government is paralysed and is unable to function and the basic problems of the day, of food, cloth and house shortage, remain unsolved. The people by their passion and folly deprive themselves of that which they need most.

Gandhiji feels that from the vicious circle of communalism, of reprisal and retaliation, only Satyagraha can



save us. But it must be no mere non-co-operation or passive resistance. It must be of the true and genuine variety. This cannot be expressed merely in negative terms. It can only mean, as the word implies, the active pursuit of truth and love. It must arise from the consciousness of the oneness of life, the recognition that "we are one of another." This love knows no hatred, knows no enmity. In this there is no partiality for one's own as against those who are not considered as such. There is in this no Hindu, Muslim or Sikh, no Jew or Gentile, no Heathen or Christian. Such love is no mere sentiment; nor is it an intellectual conviction, arrived at through reasoning. It is an active and burning faith, that can come, as Gandhiji believes, through prayer and reliance on God.

Gandhiji's conception of God is more comprehensive than the popular one. He holds that whoever believes in the moral governance of the world believes in God. The law and the law-giver are one. For him Truth (as the embodiment of the moral law) is God. Only he who believes in the moral law can believe in the active principle of love which makes no difference between friend and foe. It knows no enmity. Moreover, belief in the moral law fortifies one against defeat. Whatever be the apparent and immediate results of right action; it can never fail. Particular schemes may fail but moral action never fails. Love rooted in the moral law counts no sacrifice as too great. It boldly and fearlessly stands between the oppressor and his victim.

It is thus no mere mechanical action or inaction that Gandhiji demands of us today; nor even the suffering and sacrifice that the Congressmen and the country once went through. In the freedom fight active workers had to take risks, but they were the risks that an average soldier takes in the field. What is today demanded is not this courage but absolute fearlessness of the individual who can stand alone, even without the backing of his group. *Such courage demands martyrdom of the saint.*

In that spirit Gandhiji and a few others under his inspiration worked in Noakhali. Again they worked in Bihar. Recently in Calcutta, impelled by Gandhiji's fast, young men of Bengal and Calcutta organised the Shanti Sena. These messengers of peace, belonging to all communities, were attacked and the nation lost a few young valuable lives. But their martyrdom was not in vain. Peace was restored. And with the restoration of peace in Calcutta, the whole of Bengal, East and West, was saved the horrors of a communal strife.

Nevertheless, Calcutta, Bihar and Bengal enjoy but a precarious peace. We must realize that in India peace is indivisible. Only Gandhiji today can save both the countries and the communities. The two governments have tried to control the communal frenzy, with the help of their police and their military. The results are, to say the least, disappointing. Bayonets can quell a riot, but they cannot teach the people to be tolerant and wise. Let the members of the governments humbly accept their limitations and try to strengthen the hands of Gandhiji. They need not disband their police and military forces. But they must not put too much faith in them. Let Gandhiji be given an opportunity to work his scheme in an atmosphere of his own choice.

Two conditions are necessary for a speedy success of Gandhiji's mission. The first is, that the Government of India must convince the people that it is prepared and able to use all the resources of the State to protect the interests of the minorities, stranded in Pakistan, and to evacuate them with safety. At present an unfortunate impression has gained currency that the policy of our Government *vis-a-vis* the Pakistan Government is weak, vascillating and indeterminate. However ill-founded this impression, now that it has gained currency, it must be corrected by unmistakable evidence of the Government's strength. The people will cease to take the law into their own hands, if they are sure that their legitimate interests are safe in the hands of the Government.

The second condition is that the refugess should not be considered a nuisance. It must be realised that those Hindus who have fled from Pakistan were always loyal to the Congress and to the ideal of a United India. Any one of us could have been in their position. It is no sin of theirs that they were born in what has now become a foreign territory. They are the innocent and helpless victims of the decision to accept the partition of India. The Congress and its Governments are therefore specially responsible for their safety and honour. If a call is made and proper schemes for rehabilitation formed, I am sure the people will respond, and there will be no difficulty in absorbing the refugees in the national life. But to consider them as unwanted aliens, to be got rid of anyhow, is neither just, nor fair, nor wise.

These refugees have been pouring in since the trouble started in the Frontier and Rawalpindi in March last. We had ample time before us to rehabilitate them as they came, but they were left to the mercy of private charity and it happened to be communal charity. The authorities did not move in the matter. Today we must rectify this mistake. If we do so, and to the extent we do it, we can ease the situation in India. We also thereby stop counter communal frenzy here. Thus shall we be able to render greater help to the minorities in Pakistan. We can also, by firm and wise action, create Muslim public opinion in India which will, if properly organised and directed, have its effect on Pakistan. If all this is done Gandhiji will be free to carry his mission of non-violence and peace further afield in the Punjab, the Frontier, Baluchistan and Sind. Only thus can the communities save themselves and the two dominions enjoy the fruits of their newly acquired freedom. The way of retaliation and reprisal is the way of reaction, darkness and ruin. The way of Gandhi is the way of sanity, faith, love and light.

## I MUST EFFACE MYSELF

*(Last speech as Congress President at the A. I. C. C.,  
New Delhi, 15th November, 1947)*

Four months ago we met here and passed the fateful Resolution accepting the Mountbatten Plan. This Plan offered us freedom from British rule at the price of the division of India. We agreed to pay the price because freedom was the prime necessity of our national existence and the British were bent upon extorting the price to secure for the Muslim League its pound of flesh.

The situation in the country had rapidly deteriorated. The Interim Coalition Government was neither a true coalition nor a proper Government. The Muslim League bloc was avowedly hostile and the Viceroy who still wielded supreme power was there to play off one party against the other. The Congress leaders in the Government realised too late that they had played into the hands of the Viceroy in agreeing to take the Muslim League into the Government without adequate and explicit guarantees of co-operation. Riots had broken out in Calcutta, Noakhali, Bihar and later in the Punjab and the Frontier as a result of the cult of hate and violence preached by the Muslim League. The provincial Governments were unable to cope with the riots and the Central Government was told by the Viceroy that it could not intervene. The situation was intolerable.

The British Government's Plan of June 3rd seemed to open a way out of this tangle of chaos and frustration. Though the price demanded was the partition of India, the Congress agreed to pay the price in the hope that the Muslim League, having got what it wanted, would cease its hymn of communal hate, and the two dominions, freed from the incubus of foreign rule, would be able to turn their resources and their energy to the

reconstruction of the social and economic structures of the two states. The other alternative before us was to withdraw from the Interim Government and rally the nation for a final non-violent battle against the combination of the British and the Muslim League. This was what Gandhiji would have liked us to do, but the Congress leadership found the prospect of an immediate and peaceful transfer of power too tempting and chose the first alternative. Gandhiji himself, knowing that the Working Committee had acted in good faith and international complications would be involved in reversing the Working Committee's action, advised you to endorse their decision to accept the June 3rd Plan.

And so India was divided and we became a free people. But hardly were our freedom-celebrations over when the Punjab was convulsed by an orgy of blood-lust on either side such as India had not witnessed since the days of the wild hordes of Chengiz Khan. Quetta and the Frontier followed suit. Countless men, women and children were massacred, millions rendered homeless and property worth hundreds of crores was looted and destroyed. Even Delhi witnessed a brief spell of communal hysteria, though thanks to the presence of Gandhiji and the energetic measures adopted by the Government it was soon controlled. The result of all this is that the Hindu and Sikh minorities in Western Pakistan have lost all confidence not only in the ability but also in the willingness of the Government there to guarantee reasonable protection to their life, property and honour, and the Indian Government is faced with the gigantic responsibility of evacuating and rehabilitating millions of people who should normally have been content to live as law-abiding citizens of Pakistan. The Muslim League had vindicated its faith in the two-nation theory by making a decent and self-respecting existence a mockery for the non-Muslims in Pakistan.

How did this colossal tragedy happen? How is it that we failed to anticipate it, though we were warned of it by no less a person than Gandhiji? The fact is

that in our anxiety to be rid of the British we allowed ourselves to be taken in by Mr. Jinnah's profession of solicitude for the minorities, when it ought to have been obvious to us that in view of his fanatic faith in the two-nation theory, this profession of solicitude was a mere mockery. You cannot inculcate hatred and teach justice in the same breath. Let me quote what I said in my presidential speech at the Meerut Congress:—

“If we are to be worthy of freedom we must learn to live together and respect each other's sentiments. Hindu and Muslim minorities are scattered all over this country. No amount of police or military protection can permanently and effectively protect them from the wrath of the majority community if the latter loses all sense of moral obligation towards them. Even Mr. Jinnah's dream of Pakistan, though it has made the problem what it is, holds out no prospect of a solution, for it leaves the minorities where they are. Had his scheme envisaged a total and wholesale transfer of populations, this scheme might atleast have the merit of being a logical solution of the problem, however costly, tragic and inhuman it might be to carry it out. If the Muslim League claims Pakistan on religious and communal grounds, let it face all its implications and not try to eat the cake and have it. This (the transference of population) is a terrible solution, as detrimental in the long run to the Muslim interests as to the Hindu, but it is a logical consequence of the communalism with which the League is infecting its followers and which is making a common civilised life difficult.”

Looking back over the ghastly tragedy of the last two months, I have no doubt that we would have been wise if before agreeing to partition we had made Mr. Jinnah face the logical consequences of his theory of two-nations. We did not and do not believe in this pernicious theory and yet by accepting the June 3rd Plan we were more or less driven to adopt it as the basis of partition. However, my purpose in inviting your attention to this tragedy is not to discuss the past but

to seek light for the future so that we may face it with one mind and with a clear conception of the issues at stake.

Those of our Muslim countrymen, and they formed the overwhelming majority of the Muslim community, who, misguided by the League leadership, helped in the establishment of Pakistan assure us today that they no more believe in the two-nation theory. They are as vehement in their loyalty to the Indian Union as they were for the division of the country. Although we welcome these verbal expressions of loyalty, it is only by their deeds that this loyalty can be tested. Nor is repentance in itself sufficient to wipe out the evil consequences of the mischief already perpetrated. The last few months' experience should teach us that it is easy to divide the country but not so easy to divide the peace of the country. In spite of the national and non-communal basis of our state, we cannot ignore the fact that whatever is done in Pakistan has its inevitable repercussion in India. We should, therefore, frankly tell the League-minded Muslims that though we Congressmen and our governments are determined to protect them, we cannot do so merely on the strength of our police and army. A democracy cannot put down the common man by sheer force of arms. The safety of the Muslims must come from their Hindu neighbours who form a majority of the population and from whom the majority in the ranks of the police and the army must come. These will not be active in affording this protection unless they know that their co-religionists in Pakistan are getting a fair deal.

If that is so the Muslim community must organise itself to bring pressure on Pakistan to do justice to its minorities. This is the only way that it can show its loyalty to the Indian Union at this critical juncture. If the Muslim community fails in this effort it must be ready to help the Indian Union to adopt whatever pressure international practice prescribes to settle disputes between two independent states.



It is no good shutting one's eyes to facts. We must face them boldly and make up our minds as to what we must do if we wish to preserve the freedom we have won after years of suffering and sacrifice. The issue at stake is the very existence of our State. It is time we realised that the politics of the Muslim League and the principles which govern its policy in Pakistan are the very negation of all that the Congress had stood for and on which we seek to build our own State in India. We believe in a secular, democratic state and, whatever the provocation and whatever measures we may be obliged to adopt to safeguard its security, we cannot think in terms of a communal state. The League, on the other hand, with its creed of Islamic exclusiveness, its cult of communal hatred and its practice of terrorism and treachery is an exact replica of the German Nazis. The more we appease its appetite the more it will devour till, like the Nazis in Europe, it will become a menace to the peace of Asia. If we do not take a firm stand today and prepare against this menace, we shall, like Chamberlain's England, rue our folly.

I do not suggest that we should declare war on Pakistan. Far from it. On the contrary I hope and pray that such an unhappy contingency will never arise. But I do believe that the only way to avoid the ghastly tragedy of a war between India and Pakistan is to make India strong. There are many sanctions, economic and others, short of war, which we can use to help Pakistan see that friendly and amicable relations with India are to the mutual advantage of both the countries. Fear of the consequences of one's folly is a salutary factor in enforcing international, if not also individual, morality.

Our first and foremost duty today, therefore, is to sink all our petty inter-group or personal differences in one herculean effort to build up a powerful state which will be a bulwark of peace. I am a believer in non-violence, but I understand the logic of violence. Our State, like every other State, maintains an army and must use it when occasion demands it. Weakness, I hold, is a crime. If we lack the supreme courage of



non-violence and the will to follow the Gandhian way, let us at least have the common courage of disciplined violence. We have enough of resources and more than enough of man-power. All we need is organisation and drive to train and equip our men so that every city, every town, every village should have a disciplined citizen-army, which will be an instrument of service in peace and a guarantee of security in war. As far as I know the popular mind, the people are only too anxious to co-operate with the Government in such an organisation. I dare say the Government is aware of the urgency of the situation and is perhaps planning such a drive, but so far there has been little evidence of it, with the result that the people instead of being inspired with enthusiasm and confidence are daily becoming restive and critical and looking to communal organisations for a lead in this matter. After all in politics we must not only do the right thing but also appear to be doing so.

The people must also realise that a nation's strength is to be measured not by the size of its armies but by the ability of the common citizen to rise to the occasion. The State can cope with external menace only if it can count on the disciplined loyalty of its people. No State can be strong where the people are prone at the slightest provocation to take the law into their hands. Whatever the provocation, the kind of lawlessness that recently disfigured the face of Delhi was the greatest disservice that our people could have done to the State. Apart from the moral degradation involved in lynching innocent men and women for crimes of their co-religionists elsewhere, such anarchy is the very negation of the conditions necessary for protecting our new-found freedom. If the people have a grievance they must look to the Government to take the necessary steps and if the Government of the day is not willing or able to do so, they can demand a change in the Government. But they have no right to deprive others of the elementary rights of citizenship for no other crime than that of belonging to a different religion. Even a criminal in a

civilized state has a right to live, unless the State after a fair trial deprives him of it. It is degrading and barbaric of us to assume that a Muslim, because he is a Muslim, is unworthy to be a citizen of this State. All that we can demand is that those Muslims whose past record or present behaviour makes their loyalty to the State suspect should not be trusted with responsible positions in the services, in the interest of the safety of the State. But in no case can the people abrogate to themselves functions which properly belong to the Government. Thereby they will only weaken the State and wreck the very foundations of a stable and civilized existence.

There are at present two sources of friction between India and Pakistan, which, unless eliminated or wisely controlled in time, may develop into major conflicts or war. One relates to the problem of the minorities, the other to Kashmir, Hyderabad, and Junagadh. In relation to both these problems it is desirable that our leaders in the Government should take the A.I.C.C. into confidence and tell us what the present position is and what the Government's future stand is likely to be. On both these issues the nation is deeply agitated and Congressmen ought to know enough of the Government's policy to be able to explain and justify it to the people.

We cannot absolve ourselves of our responsibility towards the minorities in Pakistan. They were part of our nation as much as we are. They suffered and fought as our comrades in the struggle for freedom. They believed as fervently in the Congress ideal of a United India as we did. It is not they but we who voted for the acceptance of the June 3rd Plan which has deprived them of the fruits of freedom and placed them at the mercy of a party in whose ideals they did not believe. And yet as loyal Congressmen they accepted our decision in good faith, believing that it was for the good of India as a whole. They believed in our assurance that their rights in Pakistan would be adequately safeguarded. How then can we disown responsibility towards them today? How can we allow them to be treat-

ed as worse than pariahs in Pakistan? How dare we deny or grudge them shelter when they come to us fleeing from terror worse than death? You have then to lay down a policy for all our provinces to follow. With intelligent planning and proper co-ordination, we should be able to absorb in our economy a few million people. It may take time to do so, but the task should not be beyond our resources.

What, however, is exasperating is not the nature of the task but the fact that in this, as in several other matters, we do not know where we stand. We seem to be living from hand to mouth and have left the initiative in the hands of Pakistan. We ought to have anticipated the contingency of a transfer of populations being forced on us and should have provided for it in the June 3rd agreement. As it is, we have been obliged to accept it with regard to the Punjab. Although Sind, Baluchistan and the Frontier are not included in the arrangement, we are faced with the fact of a daily exodus of the Hindus from these provinces. Fortunately the situation in Bengal is comparatively better, but he would be a rash prophet who said that a similar contingency would not arise there. Are we going to let the initiative in this matter to rest with Pakistan so that whenever it suits its Government it hounds the minorities out of its land and forces us to maintain refugee camps in perpetuity? How long are the minorities in each Dominion to look for protection and shelter to the Government of the other Dominion?

The situation is illogical and intolerable. We must finally make up our minds whether the Government of Pakistan can be trusted to look after the minorities. If we are convinced that it cannot, then the sooner we take them over and allow such Muslims as wish to migrate to Pakistan to do so, the better it is in the interest of both the Governments. If, on the other hand, we feel reasonably confident that the Pakistan Government is sincere in its profession to guarantee equal rights to the minorities, then we must by mutual agreement fix a time-limit within which citizenship will be freely inter-

changeable. We must then relax central and provincial regulations, if any, about service and settlement in particular areas of the Indian Union for those coming from Pakistan. After the expiry of a fixed date the protection of minorities will be the exclusive concern of the State whose citizenship they have voluntarily chosen to accept. Some such arrangement is the only cure of what threatens to be a chronic disease.

I also feel that since the Congress is a national and not an international organisation, it is inconsistent for us to maintain Congress Parties in Pakistan, once the transition period is over. As it is, we are faced with several anomalies. Many office-bearers of the Frontier, West Punjab, East Bengal and Sind P.C.Cs. and members of the Provincial Assemblies there have left their respective areas. Do they continue to represent the Congress organisation there? These are matters about which the A.I.C.C. must give a clear directive to the Working Committee. Personally I feel that the indefinite continuance of the Congress Party in Pakistan and of the Muslim League Party in India is illogical, inconsistent and fraught with complexities.

Coming to the States I am glad that our Government has declared its policy in clear and firm terms. Kashmir has acceded to the Indian Union and unless and until the people of Kashmir have constitutionally declared their will otherwise, the Government of India shall meet any unwarranted interference or aggression from outside with all the resources at its command. Nor will the Indian Government recognise or tolerate the so-called independent status of Hyderabad. Fortunately the Junagadh episode promises to end satisfactorily. While the Indian Government has consistently maintained its democratic stand that the will of the people must be the decisive factor in determining the State's accession, the Pakistan authorities, in their frantic intrigues to grab what they can, have landed themselves in the illogical and absurd position of justifying the Nawab when he flouted his people's will and of repudiating his action when he was obliged to respect their will. I con-

gratulate the Government on its firm action in Kashmir which, though belated, has fortunately succeeded in checkmating the well-planned plot of the Pakistan Government to terrorise the State into submission. The initial success that has attended our army is a tribute to its courage and efficiency. But we must not suppose that we are yet out of the wood. Winter will soon make operations in Kashmir difficult. We must take immediate steps to see that our forces there are not isolated or unduly handicapped by the roads blocked by snow. I assure the Government that whatever measures are necessary to fulfil our obligations to the people of these states will have the willing and whole-hearted co-operation of our people.

There is yet another problem to which I wish to invite your attention, and that is the problem of the Congress objective and of the Congress Organization. Now that the basic aim of the Congress, which was the achievement of independence by peaceful and legitimate means, may be taken to have been achieved, should the Congress as an organisation and as a political party continue to exist and if so what should be its programme? I have no doubt in my mind that the need of the Congress to function as a well-knit, disciplined political party is as great today as ever. Even in the recent communal frenzy, it is Congressmen who have kept themselves comparatively free from the prevalent hysteria and by their influence helped the various provincial governments to maintain the peace and whatever communal harmony there is. Nor is there in India today another political party that can immediately and effectively fill the gap, were the Congress to disappear from the scene. Moreover, the Congress in the course of its struggle for freedom under Gandhiji's leadership has evolved a concept of freedom which comprehends a programme of social and economic reconstruction, not yet realised. We believed not only in an India freed of British rule but in a non-violent democratic society built on decentralised economy which will eliminate economic exploitation of one class by another without investing

the State with the monopoly of political and economic exploitation, which is what happens in the centralised economy of a communist or a fascist state. This concept was symbolised in the Charkha on our flag.

To work out the scheme of decentralisation the Congress under Gandhiji's lead created the Charkha, Gram Udyog and the Talimi Sanghs. Does the Congress yet hold to the principles and policies underlying these associations? Or do we consider that the three institutions, brought into being by resolutions of the Congress, merely represent the unpractical fads of Gandhiji which we accepted as the price of his leadership? In the former case the Congress Governments, now that they wield effective power, must carry out the policies worked out by these associations and profit by their knowledge and experience. In the latter case we must be honest enough to admit that these policies being unpractical are no longer acceptable to our Governments and cannot be given effect to by them. The Congress might then dissociate itself from these associations by some kind of declaration or resolution. Not to take either course is to create confusion within the Congress and uncertainty in the nation.

On the other hand, we may not forget that if India is to survive as a free nation in the modern world of aggressive ambitions and heavy armaments, and since the nation seems to have decided that the State cannot be based upon pure non-violence, India must have a powerful army and certain heavy basic industries. We have then to review the whole structure of our economy and finally make up our minds as to what sort of a State we want. That it shall be a democratic state we are all agreed. But what sort of a democratic state? Do we believe in a capitalist economy with its unlimited scope for private enterprise and unrestricted profits? Or do we envisage State socialism of the orthodox Western pattern, with its highly centralised economy, state-ownership of all means of production, and the supremacy of the bureaucrat? Or shall we utilise such wisdom as Gandhiji has taught us and experiment with an

unorthodox pattern of socialist economy, where industry will as far as possible be decentralised and such enterprises as cannot be so decentralised will be run either on a co-operative basis or owned or controlled by the State? In either case, whether of the orthodox or unorthodox pattern, we have to ask: Have we an adequate, efficient and irreproachably honest army of civil servants who can be trusted to plan, manage or control production and distribution on behalf of the State?

We have a programme for the abolition of Zamindaris which the Congress Ministries in the provinces are in the process of putting through. Are we going to rest content with abolishing the Zamindaris or have we a plan for so ordering our agricultural economy as to increase production as well? Whatever plans we have, they have to be executed by the civil service which was trained by the British for one purpose and which has to be utilised by us for quite a different purpose. I know that our leaders, who before they took over the Government denounced the civil service as inefficient and corrupt, have suddenly discovered its virtues. We take their word for it, though there is a general suspicion that the services, even where they are loyal to their present bosses, have not changed their attitude to their real masters, the public. However, the unfortunate fact remains that red-tapism, jobbery, corruption, bribery, black-marketing and profiteering are as rampant today as they were in the days of the British. In the streets of Delhi, on the pavements of Connaught Place, black-marketing goes on flagrantly and shamelessly. Where is the police and the dreaded C.I.D. that used to dog our foot-steps? Why can't they bring the black-marketeers and the anti-social criminals to the docks? The common man is as much the victim of injustice and exploitation today as he was before the national flag was hoisted over the Secretariat.

Even more unfortunate is the evidence of decay in the calibre and morale of our political workers. The unity that held us together in the days of struggle and suffering is being increasingly marred by factions and

divisions based more on personal rivalry than on any discoverable principles. The spirit of sacrifice and idealism that sustained us and made us what we were is being replaced by competition in power politics. It is tragic that we should disintegrate at a time when we need all our strength, unity and moral resources to justify the hopes that the nation has reposed in us. For if the salt loseth its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?

All these are questions which we must ponder over and to cope with which we must mobilise all our moral and material resources.

This brings me to the issue which demands consideration in the present context. It has perturbed my mind ever since my election as President of this organisation. What should be the relation of the Congress Executive or the Working Committee to the Government at the centre? This is a matter which is bound to affect for good or ill not only the character of the Central Government in the new set-up but the position of the Congress in the country. The indefiniteness of this relation has already caused confusion in the minds of Congressmen and the general public who do not know and cannot yet understand where the responsibility for any particular decision or the want of it lies.

How is the Congress to give to the Government its active and enlightened co-operation unless its highest executive or at least its popularly chosen head is taken into full confidence on important matters that affect the nation? If there is no free and full co-operation between the Governments and the Congress organisation the result is misunderstanding and confusion, such as is prevalent today in the ranks of the Congress and in the minds of the people. Nor can the Congress serve as a living and effective link between the Government and the people unless the leadership in the Government and in the Congress work in the closest harmony. It is the party which is in constant touch with the people in villages and in towns and reflects changes in their will and temper. It is the party from which the Government of the day derives its power. Any action which weakens



the organisation of the party or lowers its prestige in the eyes of the people must sooner or later undermine the position of the Government. If therefore the present confusion is not checked in time, I am afraid the Congress as an organisation will speedily disintegrate and its place in the national life will be captured by either some other organisation, may be of militant communism, or by the communist party.

I have discussed this problem with my colleagues in the Working Committee on more than one occasion and have also sought Gandhiji's light on it. While no one disputes the necessity of a close and harmonious co-operation between the Government and the Congress executive, the difficulty is how to achieve it. The need for this co-operation is recognised in theory but I find it missing in practice. It may be due to the fact that all of us are not united on basic policies. Or it may be that this co-operation is lacking because I, who happen to be President of the organisation, do not enjoy the confidence of my colleagues in the Central Cabinet. If that is so, then I should be the last person to stand in the way of what is necessary in the interest of this nation. If by eliminating myself I could make room for this co-operation between the Government and my successor, none would be happier than myself. I sought Gandhiji's advice and he agreed with me that under the circumstances I was justified in resigning. And so a few months back I placed my resignation before the Working Committee. But in view of the critical situation then prevailing in the country, my colleagues were unwilling to relieve me of my responsibility. In deference to their wishes I agreed to continue. Any longer continuance is, I feel, dangerous both for the Congress and the country.

Realising the critical situation in the country, a heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of my colleagues in the Government. They are tried and trusted leaders of the people and are guided in their action by the highest motive of service to the nation. I am therefore loath to take any step that may divert the attention

of the people from the immediate task of strengthening the State. Nevertheless by allowing the present confusion in the relation between the Working Committee and the Government to continue, we shall in the long run weaken both the Government and the Congress. I therefore want you to consider this question calmly and dispassionately and after hearing all viewpoints and weighing all considerations to give a clear and positive directive which must in future govern this relation. In your discussion you will please avoid the personal factor. It has no place in considering the present situation. You will also treat my decision to resign to be irrevocable.

You have also to decide about the composition of the Working Committee. It is today overweighted with members who occupy office in the Government, either Central or Provincial. Last year though you left the discretion to the President in the matter, it was the feeling of the house that not more than a third of the Committee should consist of such members. I respected this wish of the house in forming my Working Committee last year but since then several of my colleagues have accepted office and the original proportion has been upset. At present a majority of members of the Working Committee are in Government. I would like you to give my successor a clear directive in this matter of the composition of the Working Committee.

I know that by resigning at this critical juncture I am taking a grave decision. It is possible that my point of view may not be appreciated. It is even possible that my motive may be misunderstood. But I must take that risk if I am to be true to myself and to the charge that is placed in my hands. I have worked with my colleagues from whom I differ today for the last 27 years. That after such a long and cordial comradeship I should today find myself out of harmony with them is, apart from its public aspect, a great personal misfortune. But since I am unable to see eye to eye with them I have no right to assume before the public responsibility for decisions not made in consultation with me. I must therefore efface myself. I do so in the

assurance that the national interests which we all hold dear will be safe in the hands of my colleagues in the Government.

